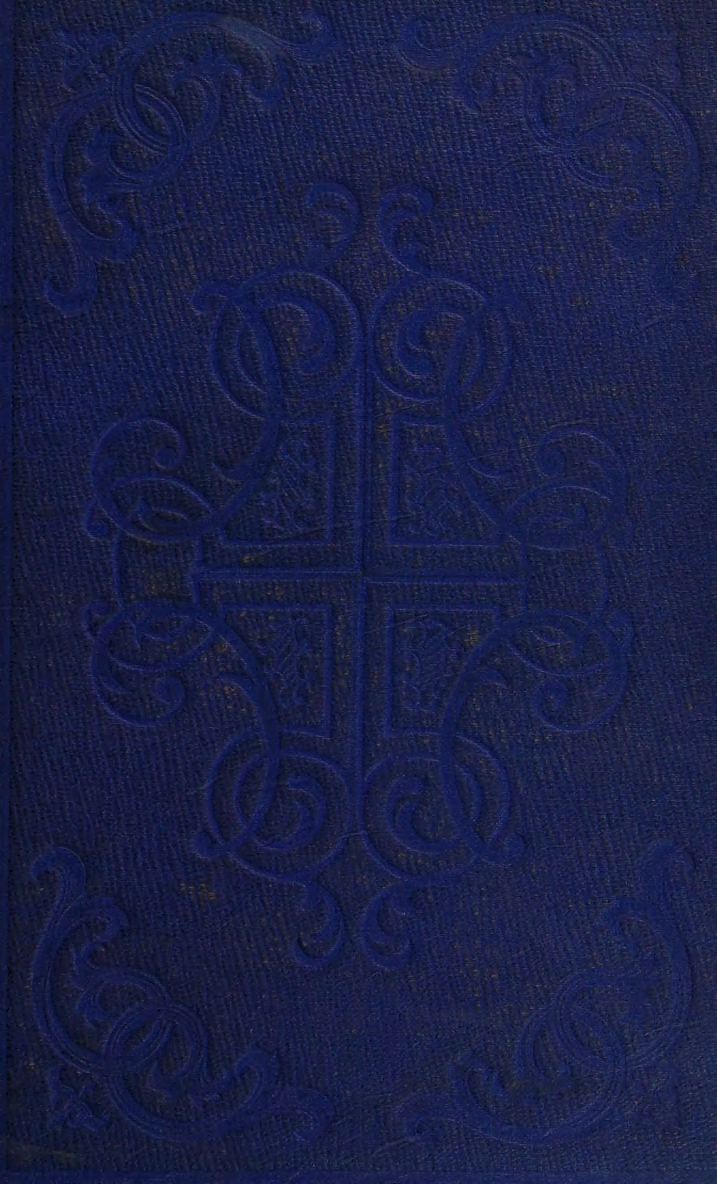

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WATER FROM THE WELL-SPRING,

FOR THE

SABBATH HOURS OF AFFLICTED BELIEVERS:

BEING A

Complete Course of Morning and Evening Meditations

FOR EVERY SUNDAY IN THE YEAR,

BY

EDWARD HENRY BICKERSTETH, M.A.,
RECTOR OF HINTON MARTELL, DORSET.

"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."
—ISAIAH, xii. 3.

NEW YORK:
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Preface.

This little work was first suggested by the seclusion of a beloved sister in the chamber of suffering. Shut out for many years from the public and social means of grace, and tried in a furnace of peculiar affliction, she needed, as our now sainted father said of her, the richest cordials of Scripture; and it has been a brother's privilege from week to week to send her some few lines for her Sabbath meditations. These having often proved (blessed be God!) words in season to her, a selection from them has been made, and adapted to more general circulation;* and now, with additional musings on

* Since these pages were first sent to the press, this beloved sister has fallen asleep in Jesus. The last lines she traced in the author's Bible, a few days before her death, touchingly express her experience—"Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

many kindred passages of the word, the present little volume has been formed, which may the God of all consolation bless to some sympathizing sufferer. A few original hymns and poems have been added at the close.

Perhaps any apology for the shortness and unconnectedness of these portions is unnecessary, as those who are versed in the school of sickness know well that it is only a few thoughts expressed in a few words which can be borne there. But they have been written, and are now sent forth, with many prayers that they may be for the glory of Jesus and the solace of his afflicted ones.

HINTON MARTELL RECTORY,
July, 1852.

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First Morning.

THE BELOVED ONE SICK

"Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."—JOHN, xi. 3.

FAITH and sisterly solicitude are beautifully blended in this message. They do not send and say, "Lord, we thought thou hadst loved our brother, but, alas, he is sick." His sickness never seems to have shaken for a moment their confidence in the love of Jesus. They simply sent to acquaint their Lord, feeling assured, that if he once knew their anxiety, he would do all that was requisite, and loving, and best. Nor had they miscalculated the heart of Jesus. He loved them intensely, though for awhile he tried them. It was true to the very letter, "he whom thou lovest is sick." Christian mourner, this is for you.

Notwithstanding sickness, suffering, solitude, weakness, weariness, want, you are one that Jesus loves. This must be "the wine that maketh glad the heart."* Believe me, it never loses its restorative virtue. A believer in the full glow of health and work can scarcely know what unwearying consolation you find in this thought, "Jesus loves me, though he chastens, and while he chastens." One who is called to active service, and a continual succession of duties requires the strong meat, and varied diet appropriate to his labor. But you are constrained to "commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still;"† you are fed from week to week with the same unvarying "bread of affliction, and water of affliction," and you find it a rich reviving cordial for every hour of faintness to remember "whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." ‡

* Psa. civ. 15. † Psa. iv. 4. ‡ Prov. iii. 12.

EVENING.

THE PHYSICIAN'S DELAY.

"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was."—JOHN, xi. 5, 6.

THERE is something very remarkable in that word "therefore." I feel sure that if you had given human reason the fifth verse, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus," and asked for the legitimate inference, the sixth verse would have continued thus, "When he had heard, therefore, that he was sick, he hasted and went at once to Bethany." But as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts,*—and he "abode two days still in the same place where he was."

We can easily picture the intense anxiety of the sisters—Will our messenger reach the Lord in time? will our urgent necessity ap-

* Isaiah, lv. 9.

pear? will he come at once? And when sufficient time had elapsed for his arrival, what painful and fruitless conjectures as to his absence! Jesus was not unmindful of their deep distress. Witness the serenity with which, when his hour was come, he fearlessly returned to Judea, where "the Jews had sought to stone him;"*—witness how, when he saw Mary weeping, and her friends weeping with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled †—witness how he wept and groaned again, though he knew that then one brief hour would turn their mourning into joy;—still, with the keenest appreciation of all they were going through, because he loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus, "he abode two days still in the same place where he was."

The reason is no mystery to us now—for we know the sequel. Through his delay his mightiest miracle was wrought. Suffering saint, you are passing through the furnace. You know not what Jesus is doing now; you

* John, xi. 7–10. † John, xi. 33.

see not the bright sequel. Take comfort from the family of Bethany. For you, too, eternal blessings are connected with protracted affliction.

Second Morning.

THEY SERVE WHO WAIT.

"And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you. . . . Blessed are all they that wait for him"—ISAIAH, xxx. 18.

"THEY also serve who only stand and wait." How fully is Milton here borne out by Scripture, wherein waiting is so frequently commended, as one of the highest and most difficult of duties. The captain of an army knows full well that he has given the most trying order, when he has commanded his troops to endure and not to return the enemy's fire. This is the highest proof of discipline. And we have the blessed assurance, not merely that the *general* conduct of our "corps" shall be observed, but that each momentary and individual act is under the immediate eye of our great Captain; for "The eyes of the Lord are upon

the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry."* Their cry, not their prayer here, in set words; but the wishful moan, the faintest dependent look, he knows, and appreciates, and answers.

EVENING.

THEY THAT FEAR HIM.

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."—PSA. ciii. 13.

A GRACIOUS title, "them that fear him;" a child's fear, a description of the Lord's people which is peculiarly tender and consoling. For, when we cannot feel the glow of love, and the *conscious* strength of faith, still we may have such a child-like fear of offending and grieving God, that we would, his grace enabling us, go to the stake rather than do what we knew to be contrary to his will. When temptations may cloud our soul, and almost entangle our

* Psa. xxxiv. 15.

reason, so that, like Christian in the valley of the shadow of death, we scarcely know whether the suggestions which trouble us be the voice of Satan, or of our own corrupt hearts; still it is this fundamental grace of the fear of God which makes these thoughts so distressing, so hateful, so wretched. A soul "in its prosperity" may feast on more intimate and endearing titles of God's chosen ones; but a tried and tempted believer will draw exquisite solace from this, "them that fear the Lord." Of such God says, "Like as a father, so do I pity them."

Third Morning.

THE MIDNIGHT STORM.

"And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and go before him unto the other side."—MATT. xiv. 22.

How mysterious, and yet how gracious an introduction to the account of the storm that follows! Did not Jesus know that the tempest was coming, that the wind would be contrary, that the waves would rise, and that his disciples would be weary and dismayed? Doubtless he knew, and yet he *constrained* them to go before him. O afflicted believer, "tossed with tempest, and not comforted,"* to whose lips the question of Gideon often rises, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?"† do not think, because you are in the path of trial, and suffering, and conflict, that

* Isa. liv. 11. † Judges, vi. 13.

you are not in the path of duty and of blessing. The disciples were following the express wishes of their Master, when all these things came upon them.

But, to explain this apparently mysterious compulsion, look at the close of the narrative: "They that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." If you were to ask any believer what blessing he would choose above every other, being conscious that earthly good cannot be desired unreservedly, he would esteem none equal to an increase of grace, or of that which is the spring and root of other graces—of faith. So here, then, the disciples attained the highest possible good. Jesus might not have suffered them to embark on the eve of that tempestuous night; but he knew that no real harm would befall them, and that they would gain a mighty accession to their weak and wavering confidence. Yet his heart sympathized with all their distress. Doubtless he pleaded for them on that lonely mountain-top,

as now for us on the right hand of God; and at the very moment, which his infinite love and wisdom selected as the best, he appeared on their behalf. What he did in that constrained embarkation, they knew not, when struggling with the waves; but they knew on the morrow, and will thank him for it throughout eternity.

EVENING.

THE MORNING DELIVERANCE.

"In the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea."—MATT. xiv. 25.

THIS narrative of the storm is full of comfort for the suffering saint. Consider a few things that distinguish the time and manner of his advent to them, and see if there be not hope for you in your affliction. He came, (1), after long toiling, in the fourth or last watch; (2), in a season of darkness and perplexity—it

was still night; (3), on the very scene of their distress, on the sea; (4), in a way they least expected it; so that at first they mistrusted their deliverer. (5.) He came unto them—not near them, and passed by—but, like the good Samaritan, came where they were; (6), and with what a message!—"Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." Does language afford more exquisite consolation? (7.) It was Jesus who came. What a helper! How gentle, how mighty, how glorious, how beloved! The sea was calm, the ship was steady, they happy in his love and in his company, and soon at rest upon the desired shore.

Fourth Morning.

FULNESS OF JOY.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."—JOHN, xv. 11.

THIS verse is significant as containing the ultimate object of all God's dealings with his children. I apprehend, from the Greek, that the meaning of the first clause is plainly, "that my joy in you might remain or be perpetual." The word translated "remain" is the same as that rendered "abide" in all the previous verses of the chapter. The two great objects, then, in God's purposes of grace are, first, Christ's joy in his people, and then, the fulfilment of their joy in him. How sweet and blessed a result from all the discipline of this life! Whether he instruct his children by his word, as then he taught his disciples, or by

suffering, or by mercies, or by ministers; however he speaks to them, this is the consummation he seeks and surely will attain—the seeing of "the travail of his soul"* in them, and their full participation in his eternal bliss. Unless they were taught, and disciplined, and chastened, and renewed into his image by his Spirit, he could not "rest in his love"† on them, nor would their joy be fulfilled (πληρωθῇ). The world seeks happiness in its way, wins the pleasures of sin for a moment, and plunges into an eternity of remorse. The flock of Jesus, led by him through the thorny wilderness, reach at length, *joy*, perfect joy, before the throne: a joy that can never weary, for it is the reflection of the infinite bliss of Jesus upon the stainless mirror of their regenerate souls. Jesus' joy in them abides perpetual; their joy consequently, by a blessed necessity, has a perpetual fulfilment in him; for they abide in his love, even as he abides in his Father's love.

* Isa. liii. 11. † Zeph. iii. 17.

EVENING.

OCCUPY WITH AFFLICTION.

"Occupy till I come."—LUKE, xix. 13.

MANY that are last shall be first. Perhaps, suffering believer, you have the most prosperous trade of any of us; and are laying out your talents so as to produce the most lucrative interest. How much of Jesus' work, when on earth, consisted in suffering! And you, too, occupy even while you suffer. "Occupy till I come." O what a world of wonder, what an eternity of rapture, lies behind that little word "till!" It is the narrow wicket to a paradise of glory. When once that "till" is fulfilled, no more conflict, no more coldness, no more suffering, no more sin; but peace, and communion, and joy, and such a sea of love as would overflood our poor earthly hearts. You cannot run away from your suffering or your sorrow, but you can *trade with* them as talents, and

think of the reckoning day, when to those who are reconciled to God in Christ Jesus, their light momentary affliction works out for them an eternal weight of glory.*

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Fifty Morning.

DWELLING IN TENTS.

"Strangers and pilgrims on the earth."—Heb. xi. 13.

Strangers, and yet the human heart is made for home: it expands under home love, like flowers under genial warmth. Pilgrims; and yet who longs not for rest, for something of permanence and continuance? Strangers and pilgrims on the earth; surely this has an aspect of mournful vagrancy at first. Yet, believer, view it through the perspective glass of faith, and it will be lit up with the sunlight of our everlasting home. Imagine for a moment that it had been written, "We are settlers and permanent habitants here on earth." "What!" you exclaim, "with these hearts of ours, so prone to grieve the Saviour whom we love;

with these conflicts ever gathering around us, in this world of sin and sorrow—permanent occupants of this? No: who prays not, Oh that I had wings like a dove; for then would I hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest?"*

Though we can thus argue the superiority of our pilgrim character most unanswerably, it is, I apprehend, a lesson which nothing but the frequent trials and vicissitudes of life can teach. For we are no sooner settled for a short season among friends or places, than our hearts send forth countless little fibres in every direction, and root themselves into every penetrable crevice of affection. And were it not for the numerous transplantings, or at least the frequent diggings about the roots, we should become like the gnarled oak, immovably wedded to the soil of our birth. Yet these clingings to home prove that we were not created for an eternity of "chances and of changes." Nor need we have the least anxiety

* Psal. v. 6–8.

lest we should ever continue in this nomad and wandering state, for "there remaineth a rest to the people of God."*

EVENING.

MANSIONS.

"In my Father's house are many mansions."
—JOHN, xiv. 2.

How does the reflection cast from the sunlit turrets of this our Father's home brighten the gloom of our pilgrim way! The apostle says, "Here have we no continuing (μένουσαν) city."†

"Sad truth, were this to be our home!"

But see in this firm promise of our Saviour an abundant reply to every apprehension: "In my Father's house are many mansions (μοναί)." The words are from the same root in the Greek. That is, what earth has not, heaven has; what time asks in vain, eternity supplies,

* Heb. iv. 9. † Heb. xiii. 14.

perpetuity, citizenship, rest,—in one word, *home.* How easily does the home-bound traveller smile at the credulity of those who commiserate his wandering life! And yet many things may hinder his anticipated welcome. Accidents may befall him. He may never reach his home, or reach it and find

"The hearth, the hearth is desolate; the fire is quenched and gone,
That into happy children's eyes, once brightly laughing, shone."

And shall we, Christian pilgrims, be downhearted? We are homeward-bound. We are sure of a welcome. For thither "the Forerunner is for us entered."* He is preparing the place for us, and us for the place. He has gone to his Father's house, his Father's and ours: and soon will he cry, "Come, ye blessed, inherit."†

* Heb. vi. 20. † Matt. xxv. 34.

Sixth Morning.

CHRISTIANITY'S TELESCOPE.

"The time is short."—1 Cor. vii. 29.

How do these few pregnant words transform the pilgrim's prospect! It is like looking through a telescope on a distant planet: every other distracting object is shut out, and the far-off world, which glimmered only like a point before, brightens, and widens, and absorbs every thought with its untold marvels. But some will answer, "While time is, it *seems* long." Be it so—its semblance cannot touch its reality. It *is* short. We are not using a distorting glass, when we look at all things through this medium, but a glass which enables us in some degree to overcome the inferiority of our position, to divest near objects of their fictitious magnitude, and to

bring distant realities into their due proportion. There is indeed much skill in using this celestial telescope, and in adjusting to a right focus its lucid and powerful lenses. Some are afraid of meditating much on this truth, lest it should take off their thoughts from present duties. But they are like an unskilful peasant, who throws an eye-glass from him on the first trial, complaining he can see nothing but dimness and confusion, and that the field he walks in is enough for his purpose. This telescope only needs prayer and practice. Use it, believer, often upon your knees, and you shall exclaim with the confident apostle, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."*

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

EVENING.

CHRISTIANITY'S MICROSCOPE.

"I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."—ISA. xxvii. 3.

YES, Christianity has its microscope as well as its telescope. Do not suffer unbelief to suggest, "My God and Father inhabiteth eternity, with him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day: he sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers;—what can the sufferings of a few weeks or years seem in his sight? are they not less than nothing and vanity?" Blind unbelief! that my Father is infinite and eternal, warrants my assurance that he appreciates every hour's suffering, and with all a parent's solicitude counts up the moments of my grief. Were there any limit to his infinity, my sorrow would be merged in the tide of a world's calamities. But now the everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the

ends of the earth, giveth power to the faint.* He that dwells in the high and holy place also dwells with and revives the humble contrite spirit.† No sigh of his children is wasted on the winds, no tear falls upon the sand. Remember he has taught us to pray, "Put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?"*

* Isa. xl. 28, 29. † Isa. lvii. 15. Psa. lvi. 8.

Seventh Morning.

STEP BY STEP.

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord."
Psa. xxxvii. 23.

HERE it is not said, the whole course of life —the commencement, outline, and issue of a good man's pathway—but his *steps* are ordered. This is the lesson of our childhood, but it is one we daily need in the riper years of our spiritual life. Are we not continually saying in our hearts, "Oh, if I could but see the end of this trying dispensation, I should not so much mind the immediate suffering, but I know not how long it may last, or what will be its result? I could well bear doubt and darkness for a few weeks, if I were sure that then all would be certainty and sunshine." O believer, whence these misgivings? You con-

fess that at present, according to the faithful promise, you are not tempted or tried above what you are able to bear.* That confession will prove the germ of assurance in the soil of faith. What have you to do with the morrow? the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Do not even during one half hour burden yourself with the anxieties of the next. The Lord will have his children go *step by step*. And be of good comfort; every step is ordered, and every step is a step nearer home.

EVENING.

THE RIGHT ROAD.

"He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation."—PSA. cvii. 7.

BUT you ask, "Is not man a prospective creature? Can he be content that the present is well ordered, without many inquisitive

* 1 Cor. x. 13.

glances at the future? Why then is this inextinguishable love of anticipation implanted within us?" True, my friend;—the gospel does not quench one glowing emotion which rises towards future blessedness. It only controls those impatient forebodings of our fallen hearts, as to whether the several stages of our pilgrimage are well and wisely planned, and whether our wisdom could not devise a less painful circuit. It assures us, once for all, of unspeakable bliss at the close of our journey; and thus gently disentangling our affections from the transient and the temporal, fastens them securely on the enduring and the eternal. But this is not all; in the words of our motto, it gives us ground for the most unlimited confidence, that every part is defined by the same loving wisdom that ordains the whole. Light often breaks in as we go onward; though sometimes, in the words of the poor Scotch woman to her famishing child, "Ye maun trust him where ye canna trace him."* And,

* From "The Highland Glen."

ere long, in that city of habitation, shall we remember *all the way* the Lord our God has led us these many years in the wilderness, to humble us, and to prove us, and—as we shall then with an emphasis of joy confess—to do us good at our latter end.*

* Deut. viii. 16.

Eighty Morning.

THE PROFFERED FRIENDSHIP.

"I will be with him in trouble."—Psa. xci. 15.

In a letter from one, who has long since been removed from a bed of extreme suffering to her rest above, I find this message, "Tell —— to cleave to Jesus, and she will find affliction one of her greatest blessings, though it be for the present not joyous but grievous." This, from so great a sufferer, is precious testimony. Oh, surely many of us must feel as if yet we knew scarcely anything of Jesus, of his love, of that tender brotherly friendship with which he wound fain gladden our pilgrim path. The ransomed criminal conversing with his sovereign forgets the wounds where the fetters have chafed him. Why do not we? Does not the conviction force itself upon our mind, that wherever we are, what-

ever doing, whatever suffering, we possess, in the proffered friendship of Jesus, capabilities for the richest enjoyment a poor sinner can have, out of heaven? And affliction, as David knew well, is the Lord's chosen time for communion. "Thou hast considered my trouble," he sings; "thou hast known my soul in adversities."* Or, as I have heard it said, "It is the sick child whom the mother has oftenest upon her lap." And yet, I grant you, these light afflictions seem to *press* heavily;—cleave then to Jesus, and we shall find that he, unawares to us, has shifted the burden to himself.

EVENING.

SINNERS WELCOMED.

"This man receiveth sinners."—LUKE, xv. 2.

YES, this intercourse with the Lord Jesus requires us continually to recur to the gospel

* Psa. xxxi. 7.

terms, on which alone we can acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace:* or our spirit, especially when tried and harassed, will faint and shrink back from the Divine glory of this society. "This man receiveth sinners." *Sinners;* no other recommendation needed. † He came into the world to call and to save sinners—weary, woful, weeping sinners; these are the invited ones. *Received*—everything is contained in that: if received, then chosen, called, pardoned, robed, renewed, smiled upon, welcomed, embraced, admitted to fellowship. By a *Man*, "the man Christ Jesus;"‡ that secures fellow-feeling, power of sympathy, acquaintance with human wants and woes. By *this Man;* "the Word was made flesh."§ Here is the sum of consolation, received by Emmanuel, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Good Physician, the Saviour of the lost. Search and look if in the whole compass of

* Job, xxii. 21.
† 1 Tim. i. 15.
‡ 1 Tim. ii. 5.
§ John, i. 14.

human distress you can find one grief this fellowship will not assuage. "This man receiveth sinners." Oh, muse on this—ruminate on this for hours, for you will find exhaustless nourishment herein.

Ninth Morning.

THE POOR IN SPIRIT.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."—MATT. v. 3.

WELL may afflicted believers rejoice in the beatitudes, and often drink of their quiet consolations, and luxuriate in their blessedness; for, precious as they are to all, they shed a peculiarly tranquil light in the chamber of sorrow. You might search all heathen authors through, and find no sympathy like this. Indeed they stand opposed to the very spirit of the world, which praises the high-spirited, the mirthful, the victorious, and shuns with heartless pity the meek-spirited, the broken-hearted, the crushed. Be of good cheer, Christian sufferer; those whom the world commiserates, Jesus congratulates. And we may say with

far truer assurance than Balak, "I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed."* Suffering, silence, seclusion—ah, this is a congenial climate for poverty of spirit, which grows best like the lilly of the valley, shadowed and sheltered. Wherefore are the children of the kingdom poor in spirit? From feeling their sin to be exceeding sinful, from casting themselves suppliantly on the Lord for mercy, from receiving pardon and righteousness from him, from learning daily their own weakness, from living daily as pensioners on his bounty, from imbibing his spirit of humility, from anticipations of glory undeserved. Wherefore are they blessed? They are possessors of the kingdom of heavenly grace, they are inheritors of the kingdom of heavenly glory. Our Lord sums them both here in the promise, "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The Bible never seems very careful to distinguish between the kingdom of grace and that of glory. Sometimes the kingdom of God is spoken of as

* Numbers, xxii. 6.

being "within you;"* at others, as being established when Jesus returns.† But the distinction is not material. They are inseparably connected, like the flower with its root. Blessed art thou, suffering member of the kingdom of grace, for thine is the kingdom of glory.

EVENING.

THEY THAT MOURN.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."—MATT. v. 4.

SOME of the sweetest thoughts of Scripture are drawn from truths apparently contradictory. Some are indeed beyond our present skill fully to harmonize; but those which, being revealed, display more exquisite and hidden virtues, are a pledge that none are really irreconcilable. Such is this beatitude. Mourners, Reason says, they must be unhappy:

* Luke, xvii. 21. † Matt. xxv. 1.

Scripture answers, they are blessed. If Reason grows uneasy, point to the beauty of yonder sun-set cloud. A cloud—there is something in its very name bespeaking shadow and gloom; yet who feels not that, impregnated with roseate light, it is the most glorious object in that western sky? Thus affliction is to the Christian one of his "bright clouds."* All the fragrance of chastened joy exhales from his chamber of mourning. The dew which falls so gloomily as nightly mist, is needful for the watering and beauty of the flower; and adds diamond brightness when the sun arises, and the shadows flee away. Every believer is one of "those who mourn" for sin, and often mourn in sorrow. Thus there is in him a well-spring of tender sympathy, which the world cannot know. The natural heart escapes the dew of Christian sorrow; but its joy withers like "the heath in the desert."† The believer's soul is "as a watered garden.‡

* Zech. x. 1. † Jer. xvii. 6. ‡ Jer. xxi. 12.

"Innumerable as the stars of night,
Or stars of morning,—dew-drops, which the sun
Impearls on every leaf and every flower,—*

the rain-drops hang on every spray; and in all is the Sun of righteousness reflected with every prismatic ray of light and love.

* Milton's "Paradise Lost," v. 745.

Tenth Morning.

THE PASSING CLOUD.

"O my God, my soul is cast down within me."—
PSA. xlii. 6.

IT is a frequent danger with young Christians, in the early stages of their experience, to trust too much to their frames and feelings of mind, to think themselves safe when they are happy, and to fear that they are unsafe when unhappy. And this is a temptation that may peculiarly beset them when, withdrawn from the bracing employments of active life, they are compelled to "feed on thoughts" in the chamber of sickness, and lie passive beneath the shadows or the gleams which fleet over the inner man. Yet, most true it is, that spiritual depression is a matter not of groundless imagination, but of sad experience; that

there are seasons when those "who fear the Lord walk in darkness, and have no light;"* that there are times, often and suddenly clouding unusual felicity of soul, when the Lord hideth his face, and we are troubled;† and when, with the psalmist, we are compelled to confess, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." Yet, may we not take comfort even from our very griefs? Does the world know anything of sorrow from the hidings of God's countenance, from the strugglings of inward corruption? Nay; they have not experienced spiritual sunshine: how should they mourn the want of it? They have not known spiritual peace: how should they be disquieted for the lack of it? Every believer has found in the Psalms the utterance of his own fears and anxieties, breathings and cries. Take courage, fellow-soldier; it is no mean proof that thou art in the King's army, when the experience of those who have fought and fallen in his cause expresses thine own, and

* Isaiah, l. 10. † See Psa. xxx. 5–7.

every watchword they used just suits thy case. And consider this lamentation, with which you so deeply sympathize, a little more closely, and it will go hard but that you may wring from it unexpected consolation. "O my God," mourns David, "my soul is cast down within me." What means this cry? Question it rigidly; be not content with a first impression; and when pressed for an answer, it will reply, "Be of good cheer." "O my gracious sovereign," exclaims the favoured subject, "I am anxious about my prospects." "O my dear father," laments the fostered child, "who will support me, tend me, love me?" "O my brother," cries the beloved friend, "to whom shall I look for sympathy?" Is there not a strange contradiction here? Does not the first clause of the complaint abundantly satisfy the desponding close? Muse on this, depressed Christian; it applies to you.

EVENING.

THE LASTING SUNSHINE.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God."—PSA. xlii. 11.

KING DAVID had been sorely tempest-tossed. Deep called unto deep; all the waves and billows of affliction had passed over him; but now he casts out his anchor—even the anchor of hope, "which entereth into that within the veil."* And see how gallantly the shattered vessel rights itself, and bears up against the storm. But on what rock does his hope fasten? Even on God himself: "Hope thou in God." He ceases to muse on sunny days gone by,—he no longer fixes his eye on the raging of the tempestuous ocean,—he turns from himself, his memories, and his fears, and rests on the unchanging certainty of the power and love of God. Herein may we spell out a most momentous lesson. Our safety depends not on our consciousness of safety, neither

* Heb. vi. 19.

does our danger consist in our sense of peril. But we rest on certain great unshifting, unchanging facts. "God is love."* "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."† "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish."‡ These great truths rise above our frames and feelings. Let us only satisfy ourselves that we have renounced every other ground of confidence, and are relying only on Jesus, as "the propitiation for our sins,"§ and we may, with David, rebuke our disquietude, and ask—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" For, all our alarms never quench one beam of that blessed sun-light. Earth—or, rather, our little nest upon it—may be in shadow, but the spacious firmament is flooded with a sea of light; and, remember, clouds are in their very nature movable and evanescent.

His love is constant as the sun,
Though clouds oft come between;
And could our faith but pierce those clouds,
He might be always seen.

* 1 John, iv. 8. † 1 Tim. 15. ‡ John, iii. 16. § 1 John, ii. 2.

Eleventh Morning.

SOWN IN WEAKNESS.

"It is sown in weakness."—1 Cor. xv. 43.

We may surely extend the application of this sowing beyond the hour of death, to the Christian's whole life on earth, which is so often compared in Scripture to the seed time of an eternal harvest.* Suffering child of Jesus, how true is it of you, "sown in weakness!" How many enjoyments are you shut out from; how many occupations must you daily resign; how many paths of intellectual activity are closed to you! Be of good cheer, your seed-time is one of weakness; your grain of wheat has been hid somewhat more deeply in the soil than others, and so has had to struggle with a heavier burden up to the pure light; but I

* Gal. vi. 7, 8.

doubt not it has struck its fibrous roots into a richer vein of mould, and when emancipated and clothed in "that body that shall be,"* will be the more exquisite in hue, and form, and fragrance for its long and sanctified humiliation. Cheerfully confide in the husbandry of Jesus, and you shall extract fruitful nourishment from the darkness and seclusion of your trial. He has hidden you, but he has not forgotten you. Is your soul at times refreshed? I know it is. Ah, this is the dew of his Spirit, and the token of his love. Think you affliction of itself would yield you any spiritual recreation? Nay, it would be as barren as the desert sand. For it is the Lord who makes "bright clouds," and gives "showers of rain;"† and that earth only "which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it receiveth blessings from God."‡

* 1 Cor. xv. 37. † Zech. x. 1. ‡ Heb. vi. 7.

EVENING.

RAISED IN POWER.

"It is raised in power."—1 Cor. xv. 43.

Yes, many and costly are the sacrifices which a Christian sufferer is called to make. The crown is a reality, and the cross is not a shadow. The joy of active service, the hilarity of the family circle, the chastened cultivation of taste, the delight of Christian society, and, chiefest of privations, the assembly in the courts of the Lord;—these and many nameless enjoyments which only they who have long been laid upon the bed of languishing can appreciate, is he daily called to resign. They seem lost and buried. But in the fresh springtide of the resurrection, how shall every suspended power start into new life and effortless activity! Each one shall be raised in power. Then and there shall he enjoy the untoilsome exercise of every faculty and affection, for "his servants shall serve him;"* we

* Rev. xxii. 3.

shall dwell in the mansions of our Father's house; we shall contemplate the glories of the new Jerusalem, and the landscape of the everlasting hills; we shall join those harpers, harping on their harps, who fill the courts above with the swell of their ceaseless hallelujahs; we shall imbibe no longer the partial, childlike knowledge of earth, but the wisdom derived immediately from Jesus,* and the interchange of thought betwixt the holy intelligences of heaven; we shall have our place in the heavenly circle, when "the whole family"† is gathered into one home, which no losses can sadden, and no fears disturb; and we shall share the unutterable rapture of the worship before the throne, in the temple of God, admitted by the Son of his love, through the communion of the Spirit, into the presence-chamber of his Father and our father, his God and our God. These things are yours, suffering believer. Wait, only wait.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 9–12. † Ephes. iii. 15.

Twelfth Morning.

O YE OF LITTLE FAITH.

"Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?"
MATT. viii. 26.

PERHAPS some reader will complain—"You have not fathomed my grief yet. These reflections are very suitable to a Christian of strong faith. I can understand how *his* light affliction seems not worthy to be compared with his exceeding and eternal weight of glory. But my faith is so feeble and so flickering, at times I doubt whether I am a believer at all; and when conflict of soul combines with suffering of body, truly 'the heart knoweth its own bitterness.'" My poor brother, deeply do I feel for and with you. It may help us, however, to consider the faith of the disciples, and see whether it knew anything of these fearful

fluctuations. Let us trace its course. There was the faith of following;* they really had some faith, or they never would have followed. There was the faith of fuller conviction, after his first miracle,† when it is recorded, "His disciples believed on him." There was the earnest desire for more faith.‡ There was a ripened faith in his Divinity.§ But is this cheering view the only aspect Scripture presents of their belief? Far from it. See their faith in weakness. Four times does Jesus address them, "O ye of little faith."‖ And on one mournful occasion, when their faith had signally failed, he makes no distinction between them and the unbelieving world, but addresses the keen rebuke to all, "O faithless and perverse generation."¶ Dear brother, think not I would lower the standard of scriptural faith. There would be no true solace in that. But do you not truly believe that Jesus is the Son

* John, i. 37, 43.
† John, ii. 11.
‡ Luke, xvii. 5.
§ Matt. xiv. 33; xvi. 16.
‖ Matt. vi. 30; viii. 26; xiv. 31; xvi. 8.
¶ Matt. xvii. 17.

of God? Would you not lay down your life for this truth? have you not staked your eternity on this? have you not been to him? have you not cast your guilt upon him? are you not clinging to him? are you not thirsting for his Spirit? would you not by his grace follow whithersoever he leads? is it not your earnest prayer, "Lord, increase my faith?" Be of good cheer. Though you be numbered among those of little faith, "a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench."*

EVENING.

THEY HAVE BELIEVED.

"They have kept thy word . . . and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."—JOHN, xvii. 6, 8.

Is it possible that these words from the sublime prayer of our Saviour were spoken of those same timorous disciples, whose former

* Isa. xlii. 3.

unbelief he had so frequently upbraided, and who all, immediately after, "forsook him and fled?" Is there not one word of reproach, not one reminiscence of their unfaithfulness, no allusion to their distrustful fears? Nay, Divine love has covered the whole multitude of their sins.* Their sins and their iniquities are remembered no more.† They are "cast into the depths of the sea."‡ "They are blotted out as a cloud, as a thick cloud,"§ from the blue, transparent firmament of his favor. Jesus presented his disciples in prayer, as he will hereafter in glory, "faultless before the presence of God."‖ For in the gospel covenant Balaam's words are verified: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel."¶

Oh, trembling believer, so shall it be with you. Your faith being a true faith, however feeble or faltering, has placed you "in Christ." You are washed in his blood. And

* Prov. x. 12. † Heb. x. 17. ‡ Micah, vii. 19. § Isa. xliv. 22.
‖ Jude, 24. ¶ Numb. xxiii. 21; see also Jer. l. 20.

"his eyes," which are "as a flame of fire,"* detect no defilement on any blood-sprinkled soul. Hear how he challenges the universe: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"† Hear how he promises: "They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels."‡

* Rev. i. 14. † Rom. viii. 33. ‡ Mal. iii. 17.

Thirteenth Morning.

PETER'S FALL.

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." LUKE, xxii. 31.

THE apostle Peter is a notable example how living faith may fall, and yet not utterly be cast down.* He was bold, energetic, ardent, generous. When called, he immediately relinquished all.† When assured that it was Jesus, he volunteered to walk the stormy waters.‡ When asked his judgment about his Master, he gave that noble, unreserved confession which "flesh and blood had not revealed" to him.§ Were it not for the fidelity of Scripture, we might have thought nothing could have shaken the constancy of

* Psa. xxxvii. 24.
† Matt. iv. 18, 20.
‡ Matt. xiv. 28–31.
§ Matt. xvi. 15–17.

his devotion. And yet how read we? He who alone of men ever "walked upon the water," took his eye off Jesus, saw the boisterous waves, and began to sink. Immediately after his glorious confession, he was stumbled at the thought of his Master's crucifixion, and began to rebuke him.* Then came his last awful denial. He did not fall all at once. First he grew self-confident. He had now followed Jesus a considerable time. Awakened souls may be humble and watchful at first; but as they go on, the danger of self-confidence increases. Judas had just left them.† When hypocrites are unmasked, we are prone to be self-confident in our own trust-worthiness. Jesus' disciples only were with him when he boasted;—it is easy to profess unflinching fidelity in the presence of Christians. Self-confidence led to slumber. He slept when Jesus was in an agony of prayer; nor even awoke to watchfulness at the piercing question, "Simon, sleepest *thou!*"‡ We will not pur-

* Matt. xvi. 22. † See John, xiii. 30, 36–38. ‡ Mark, xiv. 37.

sue his mournful fall. He fell lower and lower, till there was but one thing between between him and destruction; and that was tho omnipotent prayer of Jesus: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." That plank saved him. O, trembling believer, though your faith in time past has faltered and fallen, even like Peter's, do not despair. You, too, have "an Advocate with the Father."* For you, too, has Jesus prayed, not that you should be taken out of the world, but kept from evil.†

EVENING.

PETER'S RECOVERY.

"That the trial of your faith . . . though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Christ."—1 Pet. i, 7.

So writes this same apostle when he had struggled for nearly thirty more years against an evil heart within, and an evil world with-

* 1 John, ii. 1. † John, xvii. 15.

out. How was he recovered from his dreadful fall? Step by step. His Master's look made him remember.* Remembrance brought, through grace, the bitter tears of godly sorrow. Dark indeed must have been the day when Jesus lay in the tomb; but, on the resurrection morning, hearken, contrite mourner, what an invitation is sent by the angel: "Go, tell his disciples *and Peter*."† Why not, "*and James* or *John?*" Jesus well knew whose fluttering heart most chiefly feared rebuke and repulse; and he was sent to heal the broken-hearted. We can imagine how closely he questioned Mary Magdalene: "Are you sure that I was invited by name?" And with what reviving joy he was assured the command was to tell "his disciples and Peter." After this he had a separate interview with our Lord.‡

* Luke, xxii. 61.

† Mark, xvi. 7. These words, "and Peter," are only recorded in Mark's Gospel, which was probably written under Peter's dictation. It is no wonder he treasured them in grateful remembrance.

‡ Luke, xxiv. 34.; 1 Cor. xv. 5.

The fact only is recorded; but pardoned sinners can well conceive the meltings of his contrite heart, and the forgiving tenderness of the Lord. Again is he singled out by the thrice-repeated question, "Lovest thou me?" He answers with grief, but no longer with the self-confidence of an untried believer, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."* Love to Jesus ever after was the mainspring of his life. He who flinched from the prying question of a servant-maid, made the rulers, and elders, and scribes quail before the boldness of one who "had been with Jesus;"† and, when beaten, rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And thus, in his latest years, he feeds the flock of God from his own dear-bought experience, and encourages them in the furnace to be "faithful unto the coming of the Lord."

* John, xxi. 15–17. † Acts, iv. 5, 13.

Fourteenth Morning.

THE KNOCKING SAVIOUR

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." —Rev. iii. 20.

Believer, is not the answer of your soul, "Come in, Lord; come in"? Do you not choose Jesus for your guest before every other? and, as often as unbelief draws a bolt or bar, do you not angrily chide the officious, disobedient menial, and unbolt and unbar with your own hand, and, "like a wife when she hears the foot-fall of her late-returning husband," throw wide the door and greet his coming with the joyous welcomings of love? Oh, then, take comfort. He can distinguish between the wretched, rebellious slave, and the willing, though hampered host. Only hear his voice and open the door—he *will* come in. It

is not so with the children of this world. Pleasure comes to the door of their hearts, or wealth or honor; it is at once thrown open, and these worthless guests are entertained with the most servile attention. But Jesus knocks by his word, by his ministers, by mercy, by trial, and they close their ears, or indolently answer, "When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."* But, though the Lord is very long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, "the knock will come which is the last knock;" and this heavenly Guest, so long excluded and repulsed, will reply, "They shall call upon me, but I will not answer."† Oh the distinguishing grace, believer, that has made thee to differ! Though you never had another half-hour's intercourse with pleasure, or wealth, or fame, is not the language of your heart to your Saviour,

> "Abide with me from morn to eve,
> For without thee I cannot live;
> Abide with me when night is nigh,
> For without thee I dare not die"?

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* Acts, xxiv. 25. † Prov. i. 28.

EVENING.

THE HIDDEN SAINT.

"I flee unto thee to hide me."—PSA. cxliii. 9.

WE have considered the Saviour entering the believer's heart. Let us now reverse the picture, and consider the believer entering into his hiding-place, even his Saviour; for both are Scripture emblems.

"Abide in me, and I in you,"* is the double invitation of love. "I flee unto thee to hide me," cries the persecuted psalmist. The world, like Adam and Eve in the garden, flees *from* God, thinking to find some hiding-place in riches, pleasure, fame—those leafy labyrinths of a ruined earth. God is their terror now, and will be, they tremblingly acknowledge, their righteous Judge. They would hasten anywhere to shut out thoughts of God. But, oh blessed triumph of the gospel of peace! the believer flees *to* God in Christ; a voice of ten-

* John, xv. 4.

derest compassion arrested him in his former flight — he turned, and met not an angry Avenger, but a forgiving Father. Henceforth in every trouble he exclaims, "Thou art my hiding-place;"* and, once within that everlasting refuge, his faith rises as he surveys the impregnable bulwarks of his fortress, and he continues in a strain of victory, "Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

* Psa. xxxii. 7.

Fifteenth Morning.

NO EVIL TIDINGS.

"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings."—PSA. cxii. 7.

No evil tidings from God his Father, but messages of parental love; no evil tidings from Jesus, for his voice is the voice of a friend; no evil tidings from the blessed Spirit, for his whispers are those of peace and consolation. No evil tidings from heaven, but report of a mansion preparing; no evil tidings from hell, for no place is found there for the feeblest sheep of Christ; no evil tidings of ministering angels overthrown, for they are prevalent in their ministry of love; no evil tidings of hostile spirits overcoming, for we wrestle, with victory written against our names, "more than conquerors."* The thunder-cloud of sorrow bears solemn, but no evil tidings; it is the voice of our Father and our God. Be-

* Rom. viii. 37.

reavement brings mournful, but no evil tidings; a beloved fellow-traveller is parted from us, but another guest has sat down at the heavenly banquet, and we shall soon be beside him. The last trumpet peals no evil tidings, but the bride rejoices at the cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh,"* and answers from the fulness of a glowing heart, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." Blessed, blessed believer! all things are his, whether that eminent brother, or this Christian sister, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are his, and he is Christ's, and Christ is God's.†

EVENING.

THERE IS AN END.

"Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long For surely there is an end: and thine expectation shall not be cut off."—PROV. xxiii. 17, 18.

SURELY there is an end; to sinners, of their false peace and joy and mirth, of unrestrained

* Matt. xxv. 6. † 1 Cor. iii. 21–23.

sin, of unchastised pride, when they begin to reap the eternal harvest, which they sowed, of carnal corruption. Surely there is an end to the chastened mourners who walked in the fear of God, an end of sin and sorrow, of Satan's snares, an end of conflict, distress, and fear, and cloud; of fighting and race-running, and voyaging and going on pilgrimage; for they have won the battle, and the race, and the port, and the home. But not merely an end, an end and an expectation to them. For as the Lord says by Jeremiah, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."* (Hebrew, "an end and expectation.") What an exposition of the heart of God is this! of his meditations of love to us now, of his purposes of grace forever, when in his presence every hope, expectation, longing, craving of the soul, shall be *fulfilled*, with communion with himself, with the image of Jesus perfected, with the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

* Jer. xxix. 11.

Sixteenth Morning.

MUCH UNBELIEF, MORE FAITH.

"The father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief."—Mark, ix. 24.

AH! this, you say, is just my case. Faith wrestles with unbelief in my heart. There is a perpetual struggle, a forceful leaning upon Jesus, an obstinate clinging to him; but few sparkles of "joy in believing;" "fightings without, fears within;"* yet I would rather die than give up. My whole hopes for pardon lie in Jesus' blood, for acceptance in his righteousness. I do, and would utterly renounce every other confidence. Living or dying, I cast my soul on "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world:"† and by his grace would, at this moment, willingly lay

* 2 Cor. vii. 5. † John, i. 29.

down my life to witness that this truth would bear me safely through death's cold waters to the shore of glory beyond. This being so, what is the unbelief that so perplexes and distracts me?—A perpetual whisper (whether from Satan without, or my own vile heart within, I know not), "What if these things are not so?" Thank God, I seek to stifle it ever as it arises by a strong exertion of the will, praying for pardon that the thought should have for a moment lurked within, and casting myself on Jesus, resolvedly and determinately. This struggle has been for years, and is unutterably painful: for though, at times, I have flashes of entire confidence, of which words cannot tell the momentary peace and comfort; soon again unbelief baffles, entangles, and drags me into warfare. Lord, search me and try me: bring any hidden evil to light that hinders "*the victory*" of faith.*

Is this your case, is this your prayer, my brother in tribulation? Oh! do not despair.

* John, v. 4.

There was real unbelief as well as true faith in the father of the child; but faith was the stronger, for it prayed for help against unbelief. Jesus did not reject the struggling prayer. The child was cured.* Hold the *beginning* of your confidence steadfast unto the end.† Light shall break in as you go on. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God.‡ Yes, *his* God: he who hath no light can cry in the darkness, "O God, my God."§

EVENING.

TWO CHILDREN IN DIVERSE HOMES.

"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations."—LUKE, xxii. 28.

THERE were two children, who were placed in different homes, at a distance from the

* Mark, ix. 27. † Heb. iii. 14. ‡ Isa. l. 10. § Psa. xliii. 4.

father whom they loved. One child was with a family, every member of which esteemed his father; his name was never mentioned but with love and veneration; his character was upheld as a very model of excellence; and the child's admiration for his father grew with his years, and strengthened with his ripening understanding. Far different was the case with his brother. The family he was placed with, seemed bent on weaning his affection from his father, and undermining the confidence he reposed in him. They seldom indeed ventured upon open accusation, but were ever insinuating doubts as to his father's uprightness, discretion, or love. The child was deeply hurt at these suspicions; he stifled them continually; but they awoke thoughts of which he could not always lose at once the painful impression Often did he say to himself,—"Let them talk as they will, I *know* that my father is good, and wise, and tender; I *know* that he loves me; how often have I proved it: I am foolish to be so distressed; ere long I shall see him

face to face, and hear from his own lips an explanation of many things which I cannot now unravel: till then, suspect and suggest as they may, I *will* believe in his excellence and love." In due time the father sent for both his children to his own home; but think you he welcomed that child with less affection and approval, who would love on and trust him through base insinuation and suspicion?

See here a picture of two believers. Few doubts ever assail the happy faith of one. The other passes through deep spiritual conflict: a malignant devil, an unbelieving world, and a corrupt heart, are ever whispering hateful suspicions of his God. "Though perplexed, he will not despair;"* though silenced and confused, he continues to follow; though beaten by the waves, he clings to the rock. Though his Master is slandered and traduced, he keeps in his service. He continues with him in his temptations; and in the day of God he too shall hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."†

* 2 Cor. iv. 8. † Matt. xxv. 21.

Seventeenth Morning.

THE FORGIVEN MAN.

"Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."
—MATT ix. 2.

STRANGE and solemn must these words have seemed to the sick of the palsy. He had been brought with his diseased and trembling limbs to Jesus; his heart beat high with fluttering hope; that hope rose almost to certainty, when these gracious words began to fall from the lips of the Lord, "Son, be of good cheer." Now, he thought, this Good Physician will speak the words of power, "Be whole of thy disease." But the Saviour's greeting was different. "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." This turned his thoughts from the painful malady of his body to the far deeper plague within. It transported him at once from things seen and temporal, to things un-

seen and of eternal moment. We read not that he spoke; silently he pondered that brief but unspeakably blessed command. Oh, believe me, there was the strictest reasoning in the charge to rejoice, and the cause assigned. What would it have availed him, though his palsied strength had been renewed like that of youth, though his decrepit flesh had come again, like unto the flesh of a little child, and though he should live to a green old age without weakness or pain,—if notwithstanding his sins were unforgiven, and his soul unsaved? Would his mortal health and strength be matter of rejoicing at the judgment? Which then would sound the sweetest, "I healed thy palsy," or "I forgave thy sins?"

Believing mourner, trust in the infinite wisdom of thy Saviour, when he says to thee, "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." The miracles thus far at least applies to you. Let not thy unwilling heart reply, "Of good cheer! This is very well for others;—but my body is weak and suffering, my heart is dark

and tempest-tost, my livelihood uncertain, my beloved ones, some gathered home, some far distant on earth—tell others to be cheery, let *me* weep." Nay, brother, thy sins are forgiven; this, with every spiritual joy, includes a body of immortality, a heart of light and love for evermore, the abundance of thy Father's mansions, the eternal restoration of all who sleep in Jesus. "Be of good cheer."

EVENING.

THE PERFECT WORK.

"His work is perfect."—DEUT. xxxii. 4.

YES, you reply, I have indeed matter for rejoicing; but life, which has to others an onward, busy, changing character, is to me continuous and monotonous. I seem almost like the poor man at the pool of Bethesda,* who, while others come and go, never gets any for-

* John, v. 7.

warder. Nay, consider, life cannot be continuous, "Here have we no continuing city:"* it is swiftly, incredibly swiftly passing on; and either by suffering or working is preparing us for our eternal home. God's "work is perfect:" perfect in the love from which it originates, perfect in its means for the end, perfect in its final issue. And this work *is being accomplished* in you; and quickly moreover, like a skilful operation in surgery, with the utmost rapidity consistent with the safety of the patient. Yes, "The time is short," "The Lord is at hand:" a truth which throws its reflex light on both the preceding commands, "Rejoice in the Lord alway;—let your moderation be known unto all men."† His speedy advent will crown with glory both work and patience in his service.

* Heb. xiii. 14. † Phil. iv. 4, 5.

Eighteenth Morning.

THE GOSPEL REPORT.

"Our report."—ISAIAH, liii. 1.

THOUGH you cannot join "the multitude who keep holy day," or "hear the joyful sound" in the courts of the Lord's house, your chamber of sickness, Christ's mourner, shuts not out the music of "our report." Muse upon it, as uttered in this prophetic chapter, by Isaiah, more than two thousand five hundred years ago; words of sweeter meaning, of more penetrating love, had never fallen on our weary world. It was the fuller confirmation of the first promise, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head;"* it was the sealing of Job's victorious cry, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand

* Gen. iii. 15.

at the laster day upon the earth;"* it was the brightest reflection yet given of the still distant morning of the nativity; it was the prophetic fulfilment of ten thousand thousand sacrifices since the firstlings of Abel's flock. Thrice blessed report, containing all that earth could crave, or heaven bestow! Man was a sinner, lost, undone, miserable, far off from God, at war with himself, groaning in the gloom of the shadow of death, and sad anticipations of worse things to come. Here was One who would sympathize as "a Man of sorrows" with his griefs, grow up as a man among men, carrying his sorrows—who would be wounded for his transgressions, bruised for his iniquities; by whose chastisement he should obtain peace, by whose stripes healing; who would be brought as a lamb to the slaughter, whose soul would be made an offering for sin.

* Job, xix. 25.

EVENING.

THE GOSPEL REPORT.

"Our report."—ISAIAH, liii. 1.

WHY so much about sin? Ah, this was the essence of the sweetness of this report. It did not hide the cankering evil: it did not gloss over man's real necessities; it did not explain away the monstrous miseries of sin. No; it confessed them all; it laid them all bare; it exposed them in the sight of God and man; *but then* it provided a remedy—a full, perfect, radical cure. It held up the shattered, filthy heart of man, every power and affection defiled; *but then* it plunged that heart in the cleansing, healing blood of Christ. It declared: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."* Sad, melancholy truth! from which, when Isaiah wrote, had already flowed three thousand years and more of sin and shame. But

* Isa. liii. 6.

could you not detract something from the sweeping assertion? could you not suggest that there might have been some exceptions, and say that there were at least noble strugglings against the universal corruption? No, not for the wealth of the starry firmament, take one syllable from that declaration, "*All* we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned *every one* to his own way." Sad, yet certain truth! But, hark! the prophet continues: "And"—What follows? Death, judgment, condemnation, eternity of punishment? Nay —"*And* the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." If it had been immediate death for sin, condemnation upon conviction, and no prospect but eternal woe, we must have confessed it just; but instead of judgment, wrath, hell, this blessed report speaks of nothing but atonement, pardon, peace, goodwill, glory. Oh, suffering believer, rest on these glad tidings; are they not bright sunbeams in your "cloudy day"?

Nineteenth Morning.

THE ARM OF THE LORD.

"To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"
—Isa. liii. 1.

There is strong consolation for the weak and weary pilgrim in this name of his Redeemer—"the arm of the Lord!" The report of this chapter speaks so much of the humiliation of the Saviour, as a man of sorrows, that there is something peculiarly precious in this Divine title. Were you asked to rely upon a human arm, you well might shrink, for, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm."* But the arm of the Lord, it is the very emblem of the strength of omnipotence. David says: "Thou hast a mighty arm; strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand;"† and again: "His holy arm

* Jer. xvii. 5. † Psa. lxxxix. 13.

hath gotten him the victory."* Isaiah delights in the title: "Be thou their arm every morning;"† and "on mine arm shall they trust;"‡ and shortly after, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord. . . Art thou not it that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?"§ And when he "wondered that there was no intercessor, therefore his arm brought salvation unto him,"‖ Ah, lean upon an arm that is all-powerful for the destruction of your foes, and for your own salvation. Will these papers fall into the hand of a young believer? Think not this arm is too mighty and too high for you, for the same prophet declares, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather *the lambs* with his arm."¶ Only, remember this arm must be "revealed;" it is not man's discovery or invention, but it is God's revelation to man, given to all who ask in faith. Ask, then, and receive the blessing of Jeshurun.

* Psa. xcviii. 1. † Isa. xxxiii. 2. ‡ Isa. li. 5.
§ Isa. li. 9, 10. ‖ Isa. lix. 16. ¶ Isa. xl. 11.

"There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."*

EVENING.

THE LEANING PILGRIM.

"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved?"—Song viii. 5.

THE pilgrim's pathway Zionward is diversified and various. There are, indeed, the wells and palm trees of Elim.† There are also steep mountains, and precipitous ravines, and deep waters, and the waste-howling wilderness. But in climbing the rugged hills of difficulty, in walking uprightly down slippery descents, in wading through dangerous rivers, in advancing cheerily over barren sands, what, I pray you,

* Deut. xxxiii. 26. 27. † Exod. xv. 27.

is so grateful to the weary traveller, as the arm of an affectionate, wise, and able supporter? Again, consider, those who lean upon the arm or hang upon the hand of their friend, can pour their secret sorrows into his ear, and receive the whispers of consolation from his lips. Believer, Jesus speaks to thee: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."* What, then, can you fear? Who can be against you? None can pluck you from his hand.† Do you dread the dangers by the way? He loves "unto the end,"‡ and will never leave you. Do you shrink from passing at last the cold waters of Jordan? Be of good cheer; you have believed our report, and to you the arm of the Lord has been re-

* Isa. xli. 10.

† John, x. 28, 29. The scope of the Greek seems rather narrowed by the insertion of the word "man" in the translation. It is *οὐχ ἁρπάσει τις . . . οὐδεὶς δύναται ἁρπάζειν.* No one, man or devil. See Rom. viii. 38, 39.

‡ John, xiii. 1.

vealed. Those gospel tidings to which you gave credence in a world of unbelief, shall then sound more sweetly than the harpings of the blessed, in accents such as these: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."* The arm which was revealed to your faith on earth, shall then be felt to be the arm of the Lord, and bear you safely through to the blissful land of promise.

"Shudder not to pass the stream;
Venture all your care on Him;
Him whose dying love and power
Still'd its tossing, hush'd its roar:
Safe as the expanded wave;
Gentle as the summer's eve;
Not one object of His care
Ever suffered shipwreck there."

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* Isa. xliii. 2.

Twentieth Morning.

THE CHEERFUL SIDE OF THINGS.

"Forget not all his benefits."—PSA. ciii. 2.

"KEEP on the sunny side of the rock," said an aged to a young believer. We may be safely sheltered beneath the rock, and yet lose much comfort from not selecting its sunniest nooks. It will much help us to this, to "count up our mercies" rather than our trials, and to meditate more frequently on the innumerable blessings wherewith we are encompassed, than on the few pleasures from which we are debarred. They say, "to look on the cheerful side of things is worth ten thousand a-year." I am sure it is so in spiritual things. Though to tell the Christian to count up his mercies, is to request him to number the countless dew-drops of the morning. To bid him look upon

the cheerful side of things, is to place him on a mountain, whose summit is lost in light, and to ask him to scan a prospect whose horizon is eternity. Nevertheless, in this holy habit, which they only can adopt, who "being justified by faith have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," lies the secret of rejoicing" in hope, and "glorying in tribulation."* Let us, then, though in brief, remember the principal benefits which the most afflicted child of God enjoys now, or in prospect; for be sure, that was a holy and joyful resolution, "I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses."†

* Rom. v. 1, 3. † Isa. lxiii. 7.

EVENING.

LOOK BACKWARD AND SING.

"The Lord hath done great things for us."
—PSA. cxxvi. 3.

LOOK backward; question the past of its mercies, remember the miracles of grace, whereof you have already partaken. 1. There has been creating love. The perfect joy of the Godhead was complete in the perfections of the Triune Jehovah; but from "the exuberance of his love" he created you and others to share his eternal felicity. 2. There is redeeming love: such an infinite mystery of mercy that angels cannot fathom it. The barrier of sin was broken down. The way of access through the blood of Jesus by the communion of the Spirit was opened unto the Father. 3. There has been towards you electing and saving love. I speak to an afflicted child of God. Of the few that find the narrow way, you are one. There are many of higher

rank and nobler capacities walking the broad road.

> "Pause, my soul, adore and wonder!
> Ask, 'Oh, why such love to me?'
> Grace hath put me in the number
> Of the Saviour's family:
> Hallelujah! thanks, eternal thanks to thee!"

The blessed Spirit, perhaps, long strove with you in vain; you turned a deaf ear to every invitation; but he was not wearied. At length he was victorious. Oh, blessed victory! You were brought as a sinner to the foot of the cross, pardoned, justified, and made "a new creature"* in Christ Jesus. What mighty issues hung on that triumph of grace! The world indeed frowned and was angry, and pointed the finger of scorn at the new-born saint; hell groaned through its lowest foundations, as it was gloomily whispered there, "We have lost another soul." But good men gave thanks to God; and the angels rejoiced,† with songs of gratulation on this new accession of

* 2 Cor. v. 17. κτίσις. † Luke, xv. 10.

glory; yea, Jesus himself saw of "the travail of his soul, and was satisfied."*

These are some of the great things which God "hath done" for you. Do not all our hearts make the joyous response, "Whereof we are glad?"

* Isa. liii. 11.

Twenty-First Morning.

LOOK AROUND YOU AND SING.

"His compassions fail not: they are new every morning."—LAM. iii. 22, 23.

THINK not that your mercies lie, wholly, either in the past or the future. Look around you. Even to the suffering saint the present is fragrant with love, and he can sing in the house of his pilgrimage:—

> "The hill of Zion yields
> A thousand sacred sweets,
> Before we reach the heavenly fields,
> Or walk the golden streets."

In respect of earthly things, have you not, day by day, food and raiment? This was St. Paul's standard of sufficiency and content.* "What," said the poor aged saint with her crust of bread, "what all this, and Christ be-

* 1 Tim. vi. 8.

sides?" And when set once upon the task, the ingenuity of a grateful heart finds manifold love-tokens, besides a bare subsistence; the alleviations of medical skill in suffering, the affectionate attendance of friends who are near, the prayerful remembrance of those far away, the welcome ministrations of fellow-Christians, who remember the words "sick, and ye visited me." These things, the gifts of Jesus, and Jesus himself beside! For the gospel treasures you possess are not only the title-deeds of a future inheritance, but precious and present realities. You daily feed on Christ by faith; you live upon his dying love; you now lean upon him and find rest; you look to him and are comforted. Thus it was that the prophet Jeremiah in this piteous lamentation, broke out into praise; "His compassions fail not: they are new every morning."* These fresh unfailing mercies are yours. It was after the patriarch Jacob had seen in vision the close connection betwixt heaven and earth that he

* Lam. iii. 22, 23.

prayed that vow of singular sobriety and faith, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God."* The Christian needs no more, if only he have God for his Friend, a sufficiency for his wants, and a safe arrival at his Father's house in peace.

EVENING.

LOOK FORWARD AND SING.

"Thou shalt see greater things than these."—JOHN, i. 50.

WE dare not forget the present loving-kindnesses of our journey, but neither can we consent to shut out the bright light that beams upon us from our future home. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight

* Gen. xxviii. 20, 21.

of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."* On this passage an eminent believer remarked: "You must keep the hook in the eye, here; the affliction will only appear light and momentary, *while, while, while* you look at the not seen eternal things." Look forward then. This is an attainment requiring daily practice, and prayerful skill. For if we build up wild and unwarranted imaginations, they will vanish under the sober realities of suffering and distress; yet, on the other hand, to have a mere confused impression of glory, fails to supply those divine prospects of blessedness in which a scriptural faith delights. The notices of heavenly joy in Holy Writ are indeed scattered, and many of them veiled in emblems; yet, if we reverently gather these notices together, and mark the mutual relation they bear, and illustrate them with the corresponding mercies of time, we shall find we have a goodly array of heavenly *data* where-

* 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

with to realize the glories of eternity. Suffice it for the present to say, that every cloud of grief, however brief the shadow it casts, will be wanting in the clear firmament of heaven; and that every ray of genuine happiness, which has cheered our pathway home, will be found without intermission in that meridian sunshine of everlasting light.

Twenty-Second Morning.

JEWELS.

"My jewels."—MAL. iii. 17.

THERE is much in the nature and history of jewels, that strikingly illustrates the character of the Lord's people. (1.) There is an intrinsic difference between jewels and other common stones. Carve and polish a flint as you will, you can never make it a jewel. So is it with the Christian: he has a new heavenly birth, a new life, one with Christ and Christ with him, created anew by the Holy Spirit in the image of God. It is no partial reformation, hewing off here and there a glaring sin, but a thorough vital change.* (2.) Jewels are won with cost, and toil, and peril, from dark and lonesome mines, or as pearls from the bed

* See Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

of the ocean. "Ah," the Christian will exclaim, "here is a picture of my case. Words cannot tell the blackness of my own heart before the grace of God; and the ungodly were my chosen companions. Jesus came from heaven to this world of sin and sorrow, and rescued me with infinite labor and cost; but oftentimes with deepest humiliation 'do I look unto the rock whence I was hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence I was digged.'"* (3.) Jewels, after they have been found and won, are mostly carried many hundred miles over stormy seas and burning sands. Very few Christians are transplanted to heaven at once; most have to tread a long pilgrimage, and traverse "the waves of this troublesome world." (4.) Jewels, moreover, have to undergo many processes before they are fit for setting in gold; they are carved, and ground, and polished, enduring many a hard blow, many a delicate operation. See in this the preparing of the Lord's people for glory, their

* Isa. li. 1.

being "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."* (5.) Jewels are only bought with a great price. I need not remind you "ye were redeemed not with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ."† Oh, if earthly treasures had availed, the Lord could have created ten thousand worlds of gold, and myriad angels would have brought the riches of the universe. But "it cost more to redeem one soul, so that man must let this alone for ever."‡

Yet the weakest believer may swell the joyous acclamation, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."§

EVENING.

JEWELS.

"My jewels."—MAL. iii. 17.

WE have not exhausted this simile yet. For, (6.) jewels are prized with peculiar care,

* Col. i. 12. † 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.
‡ See Psa. xlix. 8 (Prayer Book version). § Job, xix. 25.

and guarded with especial vigilance. I once had a diamond necklace, worth many thousand pounds, placed in my hands; but the cabinet from whence it was taken was locked and double locked. There are two ways of preserving treasures from enemies: they may be hidden, and the search eluded; or they may be guarded, and the attack defied. Both images are used of Christians. "Your life is hid with Christ in God."* "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."† Nay, such is the exquisite sensitiveness to their slightest danger, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."‡ (7.) Jewels are durable—they do not decay with time. Counterfeit jewels may look well for a season, but they will not wear; for the false setting gets tarnished, and the cheat is exposed. Christians, like their crown, will be forever "incorruptible, undefiled,"§ and amaranthine. (8.) Jewels reflect the light, and shine

* Col. iii. 3. † John, x. 29. ‡ Zech. ii. 8. § 1 Pet. i. 4.

brightest in the clearest sunshine: whereas a full blaze will often detect counterfeit stones. Believers only shine as Jesus shines on them; and never will shine so brightly as in that city which has "no need of the sun, neither of the moon; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."*

* Rev. xxi. 23.

Twenty-Third Morning.

THE JEWELS COUNTED.

"In that day when I make up my jewels."—MAL. iii. 17.

YES, my brother or sister in Christ Jesus, only "make your calling and election sure,"* and see that you are among the Lord's jewels, and you may well endure the processes of preparation; for the day is at hand, when the Lord will make up his jewels. There is no interminable delay before you; but a day appointed of the Father. There shall not be one believer left out or behind; your fellow-servants and your brethren must be fulfilled:† the Lord *makes up* his jewels. There shall not be one unbeliever admitted—he only makes up *jewels*. It is a precious thought to us who have lost friends in Jesus, that they are not

* 2 Pet. i. 10. † Rev. vi. 11.

perished,* but only set a little time before us, "as the stones of a crown"† in the treasure-house of the Redeemer. But oh blessed day, when the whole company of the redeemed "shall be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God."‡ The jewels of that coronet are of various characters, as diverse in form, and colour, and brilliancy, as the diamond, the ruby, the amethyst, the emerald, and the pearl. They were collected in different centuries, and distant countries, but are now completed, and brought together; and each, like gems, mutually reflecting the rays of light, enhances the beauty and the brightness of the other. Oh, how rapturous shall the shout be at Emmanuel's coronation, when the voice is heard "of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"§

* 1 Cor. xv. 18.
† Zech. ix. 16.
‡ Isa. lxii. 3.
§ Rev. xix. 6.

"Oh that with yonder sacred throng
We at his feet may fall;
Join in the everlasting song,
And crown him Lord of all."

EVENING.

THE JEWELS CLAIMED.

"They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."—MAL. iii. 17.

BUT, does any suspicion still linger on our minds, whether such dark hearts as ours can ever be exalted to such a height of glory? Here we have the promise of the King himself to acknowledge them in that day for his. As Matthew Henry says, "Christians were in doubt some time, whether they were belonging to God or no; but the matter shall then be put out of doubt: God himself will say to them, 'You are mine.'" Oh, how delightful will that confession of the Son of man be before the angels of God—"Thou art mine."*

* Luke, xii. 8.

If we are suddenly brought into company of far higher rank than we have been used to move in, how at once does it place us at our ease, if the master of the house take us by the hand and introduce us as his friend? And the Lord of hosts will say of his jewels in that day, "They are mine. Mine, bought with the blood of Jesus; mine,—the world, and sin, and Satan have no longer any share in the believer's thoughts; mine, being filled with all the fulness of God; my crown of glory, my royal diadem."

With the assurance of a place in such a crown, and of being confessed in such an assembly, can we not, fellow-Christians, say with the psalmist, come what will or what may, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart?"*

* Psa. xcvii. 11.

Twenty-Fourth Morning.

THE WHEAT.

"He will gather his wheat into the garner."
—MATT. iii. 12.

SEE, blessed believer, here is the close of all thy conflicts, the termination of all thy griefs. Then shall every tear be dried, every sorrow soothed, every apprehension hushed upon the bosom of thy Saviour. Be it that your faith is feeble; your love most unworthy of him, its glorious object; your hope often clouded and dim; yet inasmuch as you are among his wheat, you will be gathered into his garner. The fan is in *his* hand—his hand, which made the world and all things therein—his hand, which upholds, day by day, the vast machinery of creation; but more than this, his hand, my brother, which was nailed upon the cross for you and for me, and which, all our life long,

was extended, imploring us to come, or sheltering us when we had come. Think you he will make any mistake? What, cast away as chaff one poor sinner who has clung to that hand for mercy, and sought to follow its guiding? Never! What, retain as wheat one unconverted soul among his chosen ones? Impossible! The fan is in his hand, and he will gather his wheat into the garner. Observe, moreover, it is *his* wheat. In the next clause it is *the* chaff; but it is *his* wheat, as if to remind us, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."* It is his wheat, bought with his own precious blood, the fruit of the travail of his soul, the gift of his heavenly Father, and stamped with the impress of his Spirit. Think you one grain of that precious wheat shall perish? Never! they are his. Woe be to him who would deprive the Redeemer of his own. No one can pluck them out of his hand.

* Matt. x. 32.

EVENING.

THE WHEAT GATHERED.

"He will gather his wheat into the garner."
—MATT. iii. 12.

YES, he will *gather* them, or yet more strongly in the original (συνάξει), bring together, lead together. Blessed assurance! Now the children of God are "scattered abroad;" they are often separated; now "the whole family" is part in heaven and part on earth.* Some few, as Enoch and Elijah, have obtained their celestial bodies; many more are awaiting the resurrection morning, in the separate state of departed spirits; many others are fighting their way Zionward in the church militant here on earth. The precious grain, though all safe in the strong right hand of the great Husbandman, is far asunder, scattered, and hidden; but then he will *gather* his wheat into the garner. All shall be brought together forever. "There shall be one fold and one

* Eph. iii. 15.

Shepherd." There will be no difference of opinion, no diversities of worship then, but we shall "with one mind and one mouth glorify God,"* and sing, on harps of gold, one song of eternal hallelujah, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." They are gathered *into the garner*. This implies security and permanence. While the wheat is growing in the field it is exposed to the chilling blight or the scattering storm, the assault of the insect, or the hand of the passer-by. But when once in the garner it is safely housed, it is stored for the Master's use. And when once your Saviour has placed you, harassed brother, in those mansions of his Father's house, you need fear no struggle, no temptation, no traitorous heart within, no onset of the enemy from without. "So shall we ever be with the Lord."†

* Rom. xv. 6. † 1 Thess. iv. 17.

Twenty-Fifth Morning.

THE BELIEVER'S INTERCOURSE.

"Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."—PSA. lxxiii. 23, 24.

THERE is a most intimate connection between these two verses. There is some danger of Christians desiring to enjoy all the comfort of the latter verse, without yielding themselves to the instruction of the former. It is those who are continually with their God, those whom he holds by their right hand, who will have the blessed assurance that he is guiding them with the counsels of his love to the mansions of his glory. The Psalm was written during a season of peculiar trial and temptation. Personal afflictions had weighed down the spirit of the psalmist, for "all the day long

had he been plagued, and chastened every morning."* And from the depth of his own sorrow he looked forth upon the unbelieving world, and, lo! they were not in trouble, nor plagued; they prospered, they increased in riches. His faith quailed at the comparison. The children were straitened and crushed: the rebels were enlarged and exalted. But worship in the sanctuary of God solved all his perplexities, as it so often has done those of other believers, and enabled him to read the things of time in the light of eternity. There and then he learned to prize his communion with God above all their vain prosperity. "Nevertheless," he exclaims, amid the distress of his chastened, tempted spirit, "I am continually with thee;" though once far off, I can and do draw daily nigh by the blood of sprinkling.† The ungodly may have the society of the great ones of this world, and unbroken health, and unruffled spirits therewithal; but I have the society of the King of kings, and though

* Psa. lxxiii. 14. † Eph. ii. 13.

"feeble and sore broken"* can sit at Jesus' feet, and hear his word. They are set on high, "in slippery places,"† and will be cast down as in a moment; whereas, "Thou hast holden me." Though perchance now I walk through the valley of humiliation and tears, "Thou hast holden me by my right hand."

EVENING.

THE BELIEVER'S ASSURANCE.

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterawrd receive me to glory."—PSA. lxxiii. 24.

YES, it is from the communion we enjoy on earth that we obtain the foretaste and anticipation of the communion we shall have hereafter. It is when we catch the whispers of his Spirit saying, "The blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin,"‡ that we can realize the bliss of being "presented faultless before the pres-

* Psa. xxxviii. 8. † Psa. lxxiii. 18. ‡ 1 John, i. 7.

ence of his glory with exceeding joy."* It is when we hear his voice, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden,"† that we can anticipate the welcome, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom."‡ It is when the Comforter takes of the grace and glory of Jesus, and shows him unto us,§ "whom having not seen, we love,"‖ that we have a foretaste of the hour when our eyes shall see the King in his beauty."¶ And what as to the intervening season, the journey betwixt us and our home, the little while, which to love seems so long, ere we see him as he is? Why, as to this we gain a comfortable assurance—"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel." The infinite wisdom of the Triune God is applied to order our intermediate pathway. There is not one step, not one winding of our way, not one incident of our travel, but each is foreseen and provided for, so that we can say, "We know that all things work to-

* Jude, 24. † Matt. xi. 28. ‡ Matt. xxv. 34.
§ *See* John, xvi. 15. ‖ 1 Pet. i. 8. ¶ Isa. xxxiii. 17.

gether for good."* Blessed result of being continually with God! O harassed soldier, get thee to thy strong habitation, whereunto thou mayest continually resort;† and thou wilt find "the Captain of thy salvation is bringing thee among his many sons unto glory."‡

* Rom. viii. 28. † Psa. lxxi. 3. ‡ Heb. ii. 20.

Twenty-Sixth Morning.

THE PRUNING KNIFE.

"Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."—JOHN, xv. 2.

YOU have seen a skilful gardener pruning a vine; how he disentangles its vagrant tendrils, which were clasping unsuitable supports; how he cuts off its superfluous shoots, which were wasting its strength in their wild luxuriance; how tenderly he trains the fruit-bearing branches, often against their will, that they may occupy their appointed space, and bask in the warmest sunshine. A heedless spectator blames the merciless severity of his pruning-knife. "My friend," replies the gardener, "I am looking to the autumn; it is a healthy plant; it will soon recover its shorn appearance, and all its strength will now go to nourish and mature its delicious grapes. Think you

I would take all these pains with a wild vine, or a sapless graft? Believe me, I take peculiar interest in that tree, and expect much praise from its fruit."

Yes, suffering child of God, it is the fruit-bearing branches which Jesus purges and prunes: the unfruitful ones are "cast forth and withered." Think not, because of the keenness of your sorrows, that you are not a branch of the true vine. Every living bough bears marks of the knife. Be it that some of your dearest hopes have been broken, and the affections you had twined round earthly things disentangled; be it that your health, your wealth, your friends, have been taken away, be it that you are taken from where you wished to be, and constrained to occupy an irksome position—it is only what the gardener does with his favorite plant. Instead of struggling with his will, yield yourself to his training; draw larger supplies from the life-giving parent stem; bend your energies, not to waywardness of growth, but to richness of fruit; and in the

everlasting summer you will bless the hand that ventured to apply the unflinching severities of love.

EVENING.

MUCH FRUIT.

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."—JOHN, xv. 8.

I BELIEVE there is no Christian who might not bring forth *much fruit;* nor any one who ought to be content without. Connect this verse with the 13th verse of the previous chapter: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son;" that is, "much fruit," and prayer granted for Jesus' sake, unite in one blessed, eternal result—the glory of the Father. Now, the chain of reasoning is the most simple and conclusive imaginable. Much glory to God results from much fruit in his children.

Much fruit requires much grace from Jesus, for "he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing."* Much grace is the pledged answer to much prayer; "Whatsoever ye shall ask;" there are a thousand requisites, bring every one to the throne of grace. Lastly, much prayer is the link of the chain that touches us. "Duties are ours, events are God's." This is our blessed duty. We know not, indeed, "what we should pray for as we ought;"† but he will put upon us "the Spirit of grace and of supplications,"‡ who helpeth our infirmities.

Have I not proved from Scripture that there is no Christian who might not bring forth much fruit? Oh, believer, make this case yours; be, so to speak, careless of everything else, if only you may bring forth much fruit. Think not it springs from active service only. Ah, many a rich cluster of grapes has ripened on the bed of affliction. Ere long the hea-

* John, xv. 5. † Rom. viii. 26. ‡ Zech. xii. 10.

venly Husbandman and Bridegroom, when his election is complete, shall say with exultation, "My wife is as the fruitful vine upon the walls of mine house."*

* Psa. cxxviii. 3.

Twenty-Seventh Morning.

WHAT GRACE HAS DONE.

"By the grace of God I am what I am."—1 Cor. xv. 10.

THINK what grace did for St. Paul. Once he made "havock of the church;"* he was "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious;"† yea, in wounding his disciples, he wounded and persecuted Christ himself. All his noble talents were leagued on the side of Satan; his deep learning, his fearless intrepidity, his enthusiastic zeal, all the powers of that "myriad-minded" man, were confederate against his God and Saviour. His early prejudices, his present plans, his future hopes, were as walls and bulwarks around his unbelief. But then, grace came, omnipotent grace; and the ramparts of that great soul fell like the walls of

* Acts, viii. 3. † 1 Tim. i. 13

Jericho; the impregnable citadel was carried in an hour, and all its ample magazines were redeemed for the service of the Lord. Henceforth he lived for Christ. One thing he did, he pressed towards the mark; he seemed to claim and desire no time, no cessation, no repose for himself; Christ was his all and in all, the salvation of souls his one master passion. How cheerfully does he buffet the waves of affliction, while he keeps his eye on the firm shore of eternity, near at hand. Death was no gloomy subject to him, for he desired to depart and be with Christ; and yet life was full of momentous interests, for every day bore the rich fruit of his labors to the glory of his Master.

Behold the work of grace! free, unbought, unmerited, unlimited grace! Boasting was excluded. It was all grace from the foundation to the top-stone; but how glorious the work when finished! how was Jesus magnified in him! What multitudes may trace to his instrumentality their everlasting felicity.

Truly "the grace bestowed upon him was not in vain."*

EVENING.

WHAT GRACE CAN DO.

"Ye all are partakers of my grace."—PHIL. i. 7.

WE have seen what grace did for St. Paul. Believer, you are a partaker of the same grace, and according to your measure that grace can enable you to bring forth the same fruits. Were you in any way dependent upon yourself, it would be presumption to expect such a high standard of holiness and usefulness; but remember, it is grace, all grace. You are not magnifying self, but Christ: you are not glorifying your ability, but God's. Call yourself by what name you will expressive of strengthlessness and worthlessness—say you are "foolish, weak, base, despised,"† yea, not worthy the name of an instrument in God's hand at all,

* 1 Cor. xv. 10. † 1 Cor. i. 26, 28

"a thing that is not"—still these are the very things which God hath chosen to confound the wise, the mighty, the noble of this world. These are his choice instruments, "that no flesh should glory in his presence."* Remember the victory in the valley of Ramath-lehi.† Who would think of ascribing the triumph to the base, insignificant instrument? And if the jawbone of an ass in the strong grasp of a Samson could perform such prodigies, why should you, who are upheld by the arm of Omnipotence, grow faint-hearted in the heavenly warfare? Grace enabled St. Paul even "to glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him;"‡ to sing at midnight in the inner prison;§ to be willing to die at Jerusalem, "not counting his life dear unto him, so that he might finish his course with joy."‖ Blessed believer, there is the same grace for you.

* 1 Cor. i. 29. † Judges, xv. 14, 17.
‡ 2 Cor. xii. 9. § Acts, xvi. 25.
‖ Acts, xx. 24; xxi. 13.

Twenty-Eighth Morning.

THE LEADING APART.

"Jesus leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves"—MARK, ix. 2.

THOSE who had heard the weighty commission given to the disciples, "Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; preach (as ye go); heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out devils;"* or those who had seen them diligently and successfully engaged in their ministry of mercy, might, with some show of reason, have asked, "Why are these men called away from their holy and momentous work? The time is short; while they are absent, the sick may die and souls may perish." But we may rest assured the Lord knew what he was about, when he led his three chosen disciples into an high mountain

* Matt. x. 6–8.

apart by themselves; that not one soul was damaged, but multitudes eternally blessed by their temporary seclusion. He was about to manifest himself unto them in his transfiguration glory as he did not unto the world. How confidently do the apostles hereafter appeal to this as the most irresistible evidence of his Divinity. "We beheld his glory," writes St. John, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,"* and referring to this hour St. Peter adds, "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty."†

Christian sufferer, you may have been called from some station of eminent usefulness to lie upon the bed of weakness and solitude; and may easily perplex your spirit by asking, "Who will carry forward my spiritual work? will it not suffer from my absence? shall I ever recover the vantage-ground I now am losing?" Only believe that Jesus is leading you by the hand, only seek to gain clearer views of his glory, only commit your work to

* John, i. 14. † 2 Pet. i. 16.

him to whom you have committed your soul; and your future usefulness shall evidence, "He hath done all things well."

EVENING.

GOODLY RETIREMENT.

"Master, it is good for us to be here."—MARK, ix. 5,

GOOD indeed; they had left the toil and trouble of the world below; they had escaped the ignorance and incredulity of man; they were with Jesus, and with him now that somewhat of the brightness of his glory shone through the tabernacle of his humanity; they witnessed how departed saints were not lost but only withdrawn, and at the call of theis Master would quietly and quickly reappear on the visible stage of things; they heard the conversation which they held with the Lord; and the undefined, half-conscious impression of intense joy found utterance in these words of St. Peter, "Master, it is good for us to be here."

Believer, have you not felt like emotions at some favored hours of spiritual experience? Perhaps some season of silent communion with your God, some occasion of holy intercourse with your brethren, some heavenly fellowship at the table of your Lord; some sabbath evening, when the continual play of sabbath influences upon the mind throughout the day has filled you with that holy "peace which passeth all understanding"—at such times have you not been ready to exclaim, "Master, it is good for us to be here," and fain never more to descend to the stress and the struggle of life? Yet consider, if the apostles' course had terminated on the mount of transfiguration, what disastrous consequences, speaking after the manner of men, would have ensued for earth; what a diminished harvest of glory for themselves. Be content, believer, to climb or to descend the mountain as your master wills; at no distant day thou shalt hear the final call, "Come up hither," and find not tabernacles but mansions prepared.

Twenty-Ninth Morning.

THE FRIENDLY TEMPEST.

"Stormy wind fulfilling his word."—Psa. cxlviii. 8.

It is easy for us, when the south wind blows softly, when "the flowers appear on the earth, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land,"* when we are led on in green pastures and by the waters of comfort, to confess the goodness of the Lord, and acknowledge how tenderly and wisely he is guiding us homeward. The confession is, indeed, most true, and the Lord delights in such grateful praises of his happy, peaceful children. Still it is an easy lesson from faith's primer; we can soon read it fluently; but there are more obscure passages in God's providence, which even advanced Christians

* Songs, ii. 12.

often only spell out with difficulty. When the heaven grows black with clouds and wind, when the roll of the thunder seems nearer every peal, and the lightnings more vivid every flash, when the storm falls upon us, and the waves rage horribly on every side, —then to look confidingly upward and say, "The stormy wind fulfilleth his word;". "The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet:"* this is the victory of faith." This eminently honors God, and enables us, (as scientific men have recently discovered the law of storms, and can now use these once dreaded hurricanes to further their onward voyage,) with the heavenly science of faith, to rejoice in the tempest of tribulation, and employ its tumultuous blasts to hasten our heavenward journey.

* Nahum, i. 3.

EVENING.

THE DESIRED HAVEN

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven."
—PSA. cvii. 30.

MAY we not apply that little word *so* to the terrific storm that had been before described, as well as to the blessed calm which succeeded it? For the tempest is expressly declared to be one of the works of the Lord, one of his wonders in the deep; then he calms the storm, and *so* he brings them to the haven where they would be. If we may, this would make the word deeply significant and emphatic. The command given, the raising of the stormy wind, the lifting up of the waves, the mariners mounting to heaven, and going down again to the depths, their soul melting because of their trouble, their reeling to and fro, and staggering on the billows, until the prayer of anguish is wrung from their hearts, and ascends in strong crying to God—all these, as well as the quiet

calm that follows, would go to make up that "so;" they were all steps in the infinite wisdom of that course whereby he brings them to their desired haven. There is peculiar force in that expression, "their desired haven." I have seen many ships in stress of weather gladly put into a harbor of refuge; but oh, it was not their desired haven; they were all anxiety for the wind to change and the weather to moderate, that they might steer again to their destined port: they have been driven back again and again to this way-side shelter, but never dreamed for a moment of making it a substitute for their far-off home: they were bound for another haven, and thither they must go.

Tempest-tossed believer, hold on thy way, enjoy gratefully such shelter as the Lord allows thee; but think not to find thy rest, till thou canst anchor in the desired haven of glory.

Thirtieth Morning.

MERCY, NOT SACRIFICE.

"I will have mercy, and not sacrifice."—MATT. ix. 13.

THERE are two diverse temptations that assail the soul from opposite quarters: one, perhaps, the most frequent, that of self-indulgence; so sparing ourselves, our strength, our time, our money, that we offer to the Lord that which will cost us little or nothing: the other, and that no unusual one, impetuous self-sacrifice; so not sparing ourselves, that we exhaust our talents prematurely, and appear as if we thought *our* work and labors indispensable. This, too, is a temptation from the evil one. There may be occasions, doubtless, when upon a clear call of duty, like the Macedonians, we must be willing to spend and be spent "to our

power, yea, and beyond our power;"* when, like Epaphroditus, "for the work of Christ" we must not regard our life;† when "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren;"‡ and like St. Paul, be "ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus."§ But there are also occasions when the Lord as plainly says, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile;"‖ when he says, "Your strength is to sit still. . . . In returning and rest shall ye be saved;"¶ when his providences charge us, "Be still, and know that I am God."** The feeling naturally rises, "I must work, I cannot give up; I will sacrifice health, and wealth, and everything to continue in active service." My brother, here you are saying, "I will sacrifice everything;" the Lord replies, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." The will of God and yours are opposed. Can there be a moment's question

* Cor. viii. 3. † Phil. ii. 30. ‡ 1 John, iii. 16.
§ Acts, xxi. 13. ‖ Mark, vi. 31. ¶ Isa. xxx. 7, 15.
** Psa. xlvi. 10.

which should give way? Jesus has taught you when he prayed, "Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt."*

EVENING.

THE UNDERSTANDING FRIEND.

"For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."—PSA. ciii. 14.

THE same principle applies to a Christian in the chamber of sickness. He is shut out indeed from active service, so far he is compelled to rest on his arms; but the believer's chief battle-field is within, and though the world be excluded, he has still to wage daily warfare with the flesh and the devil. In this warfare, "the Lord will have mercy, and not sacrifice." It may seem a trivial remark, but I believe many are tried with a certain conscientious scruple, that whatever happens they will not diminish aught from their religious exercises;

* Mark, xiv. 36.

and thus, with a debilitated body, they make a weariness of that which in health would be their comfort and refreshment. But he knoweth our frame, he knoweth what we have need of before we ask him. Watch a mother as she nurses her sick child. How she catches the faintest intimations of its wants; and broken whispers, and signs, which would be to others unintelligible, make every necessity known to here wakeful solicitude. And yet hers is at best but imperfect knowledge and imperfect love. But He who loves us infinitely, knoweth our frame, and remembers—for he deeply experienced our susceptibility of suffering and sorrow—he remembers that we are dust.

Thirty-First Morning.

THE QUIET CONQUERORS.

"Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you."—2 CHRON. xx. 17.

WHEN an afflicted believer considers the number and malignity of his foes, that the world around him is one vast battle-field of temptation, that his traitorous heart within is ever ready for treachery, that "he wrestles not against flesh and blood, but against wicked spirits,"* whose vigilance detects every moment of weakness, and whose fiendish hostility never waits till he has recovered his strength; when looking at himself he can only exclaim, "I am feeble and sore-broken;" when, again, he remembers his Captain's charge, "Fight the good fight"—may he not easily be cast down

* Eph. vi. 12.

at such a review, and say, "I have no strength for the war, the burden is too great for me?" Jehoshaphat's victory may repel every fear; Judah won, and yet fought not.* They set themselves in battle array, they sang hallelujahs of triumph, they were all ready to fight, and yet not one sword-stroke was needed, not one arrow was shot, not one lance was flung. Had they tremblingly kept within the city walls, or, panic-stricken, dispersed to their homes, the battle would never have been won. "The battle is not yours," exclaims the prophet, "but God's;" still he bids them take the field and set their array. Then God fought for Israel.

Christian soldier, only see to it that you are in the path of duty, or if you will, upon the bed of duty; and though too ill to frame a prayer, or wield, as you are wont, the sword of the Spirit, rest assured that a successful fight is waging, that God has undertaken for you,† and that even now you are among

* 2 Chron. xx. 21, 22. † Isa. xxxviii. 14.

those who "are more than conquerors through him that loved them."*

EVENING.

THE REBUKED FOE.

"He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there."—2 Kings, xix. 32.

Peculiarly comforting to the tempted and tried disciple is the experience of Hezekiah, during Sennacherib's invasion. There was such an overwhelming multitude of foes, they came with such anticipations of triumph, they pleaded with such show of reason their past successes †—they even arrogated the Divine commission to destroy,‡ and promised such seductive allurements if Israel would only submit §—nothing of might, nothing of subtlety seemed wanting to make their onset irresistible —yet faith stood the shock; the proud waves

* Rom. viii. 37.
† 2 Kings, xviii. 33, 34.
‡ 2 Kings, xviii. 25.
§ 2 Kings, xviii. 32.

of that invasion broke harmless on the rock of confidence in God. How much wisdom was there in the king's commandment, "Answer him not!"* We may learn much from it for our heavenly warfare. Often is it our wisdom not to reason with, or attempt to answer the temptations that assail our faith. Simply, like Hezekiah, carry them to the Lord in prayer; spread them before the Lord. If we argue the suggestions that trouble us, argue them in prayer before the mercy-seat, we shall find, as Hezekiah did, a ready answer to all "the bold, but baseless" arguments of our arch-enemy. And while we are praying, our prayer enters into the ears of the Lord of hosts, and he sends us, not as of old, by the mouth of his prophet, but as surely by the pledge of his promises, an answer of peace and an assurance of salvation.

* 2 Kings, xviii. 36.

Thirty-Second Morning.

LOOK AND LIVE.

"Look unto me, and be ye saved."—Isa. xlv. 22.

THE sight of Jesus by faith is the beginning of spiritual life. Wounded, diseased, dying, the Israelites lay along their stricken camp, when the joyful proclamation is heard, "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole:—every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." * Weary, woful, withering away under the deadly plague of sin, sinners lie in earth's vast lazar-house, awaiting death, and after death the judgment. But the glad tidings of the gospel are proclaimed in that abode of disease and death: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh

* Numb. xxi. 8, 9.

away the sin of the world."* And it comes to pass, every one when he looketh upon him lives. There is that in the sight of a crucified Saviour, brought home to the heart by the Spirit of God, which conveys life to the dying soul. The sinner's guilt transferred to Jesus, there cancelled and forever blotted out; the Saviour's goodness transferred to the sinner, laid upon him, clothing him forever. Oh, blessed transference! Henceforth the sinner lives. He looks, believes, lives, and loves.

Suffering Christian, your affliction may prevent any close and intimate reasoning, and physical weakness may baffle you when you assay any deep meditations: how precious then to you the unparalleled simplicity of the gospel plan! Christ died for you, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring you to God. "We care for no knowledge in the world but this," writes the learned and clear-sighted Hooker, "that man hath sinned and God hath suffered." All his learning exhausted not this

* John, i. 29.

blessed, simple truth. This at least you know and understand. Amidst the shipwreck of health, and strength, and intellectual powers, and earthly hopes, cling to this plank—the most learned and noble are saved by no other —it will bear you safely to glory.

EVENING.

RUN, LOOKING.

"Run . . looking unto Jesus."—HEB, xii. 1, 2.

NOT only is the sight of Jesus the beginning of our spiritual life, it is also its continuation. Like Moses, we only endure "as seeing Him who is invisible."* Like Peter, we can only walk upon the waves of this troublesome world while we look at Jesus: as soon as we begin to look at the boisterous waves and winds, we shall begin to sink. The word in the original † for *looking* unto Jesus is peculiarly full of

* Heb. xi. 27. † ἀφορῶντες.

meaning—it is "looking off unto Jesus." As the racer looked not at the wayside objects, but kept his eye upon the laurel wreath at the distant goal, so let the believer, looking off the enticing pomps and pleasures of this wicked world, looking off the troubles and trials which may so easily perplex him with unbelieving fears, look stedfastly at Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith. So running he shall obtain.

Thirty-Third Morning.

A CLEARER SIGHT.

"Absent from the body,—present with the Lord."—2 Cor. v. 8.

The sight of Jesus sheds a glow and a brightness over the gloomy hour of death. He will be with us through all the dark valley, so that, as M'Cheyne says, "The valley shall be filled with light." He will meet us on the other side. If death overtake us before the coming of our Lord, as soon as we close our eyes on the things of earth, we shall open them upon Jesus. "Absent from the body,—present with the Lord"; there is no interval of dreary separation, but as soon as the disembodied spirit enters the unseen world, it is with Jesus. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee;"*

* Isa. xliii. 2.

and the same hand that invisibly bore us through the rivers, shall visibly greet us to the shore of glory. This made St. Paul desire "to depart, and to be with Christ, which," he assures us, "is far better."* And though we have not much in Scripture revealed concerning the state of departed spirits before the resurrection, it is evidently, from this passage, one of closer, fuller, more conscious, more present, and more visible communion with Christ than we can enjoy on earth. It is, indeed, an imperfect state individually, as St. Paul implies, when he says, "Not for that we would be unclothed," while our body remains death's trophy in the grave; and imperfect socially, for "they without us shall not be made perfect" † while part of the host is militant here on earth. Still it is a mighty advance on our present condition: it is "sleeping in Jesus." What calm, unspeakable rest is implied in these words! And what a resting-place! See a weeping, weary child hushed

* Phil. i. 33. † Heb. xi. 40.

to sleep upon its mother's bosom. Faint image of the emancipated soul.

Afflicted saint, is death in prospect? Care not to think of its physical terrors, the needful strength will be given for "the time of need;" but familiarize this aspect of it to your mind, it is to be "present with the Lord," "to be with Christ," "to sleep in Jesus;" when the struggle shall be forever ended, and the voice of the tempter forever stilled. Is it not "far better?"

EVENING.

PERFECT SIGHT.

"When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."—1 JOHN, iii. 2.

BUT though far better, it is not the best of all: that remaineth for the time when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and

with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first:" and "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."* Then shall we be satisfied, when we awake up after his likeness;† when this natural body, sown in corruption, in dishonor, in weakness, in mortality, is raised a spiritual body, in incorruption, in glory, in power, in immortality;‡ when, presented "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,"§ we catch and reflect, even as a polished mirror, "the cloudless effulgence of his love." "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Can words be stronger? There is no room for imperfection here—it cannot slide in between the Saviour and his glorified people. Perfect holiness, and therefore perfect bliss. Never shall we weary of that contemplation. If we look continuously upon a work of human

* 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.
† Psa. xvii. 15.
‡ 1 Cor. xv. 42–44, 54.
§ Jude, 24.

art, however exquisite and elaborate, in time we exhaust its marvels or its beauties, and we desire something new. But of Jesus it is written, "His name is Wonderful (or Secret)."* Whatever attainment in knowledge of him we acquire, there remains an infinite fulness yet unexplored. And throughout eternity will his unfathomable love, and wisdom, and glory, and power, combine to afford a never-ending feast of joy to his blissful and adoring people.

* Isa. ix. 6. See margin of Judges, xiii. 18.

Thirty-Fourth Morning.

WHAT, LORD?

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—ACTS, ix. 6.

How many of our perplexities arise from so often asking, "Why, Lord?" instead of "What, Lord?" Who has watched children in their studies or their play, without observing how frequently, when a command is given, the question rises to their lips, "But why, mother?" A wise parent will by no means always answer this inquisitive "why;" often her only reply is, "Because I tell you, my child:" for thus only can she teach implicit obedience. Oh that we remembered the lessons of our childhood in the heavenly schoolroom. Oh that, when we heard or read the directions of Scripture, we obeyed with childlike faith. But how often, instead of quieting

our souls as a weaned child, do we exercise ourselves in matters too high for us;* and then no wonder that we are puzzled and baffled, and have to confess with David, "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped." Words cannot tell the peace that flows from receiving with unquestioning trust the precepts and and promises of God's word. Their apparent contrarieties all vanish when received on trust and reduced to practice. The gospel key exactly fits the intricate wards of man's nature. You may ask, Why is it? how can it be? and such like queries, for years; but apply it, and the mystery is solved at once.

EVENING.

READ THE SIGN-POSTS.

"I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go."—PSA. xxxii. 8.

WOULD that, in the heavenly pilgrimage, we used the directions of the Bible as travellers

* Psa. cxxxi. 1, 2.

use the sign-posts in every perplexity of their road! To begin with the very beginning of spiritual life. When first the Spirit of God awakens the soul to see its lost condition, as dead in trespasses and sins, how plain the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'* How clear the promise, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."† Do not stand questioning, but come. But you say, "My heart is hard";—I know it—desperately hard; but look again, "He (the Comforter) will reprove the world of sin,"‡ and "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"§ Do not stand questioning, but ask. Convinced of sin, and sorrowing with a godly sorrow, you cry, "O wretched man that I am;" but look up, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."‖ Do not hang your head

* Matt. xi. 28. † John, vi. 37.
‡ John, xvi. 8. § Luke, xi. 13.
‖ John, i. 29.

in doubt, but gaze with weeping eyes upon your dying, crucified Redeemer. You ask again, "Was *my* sin laid on him?—may such as I hope for pardon?" Search, and you shall find, "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish;"* "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely:"†—do not linger, but take. Having set out on the way, you are assaulted with unbelieving fears: look for the sign-post; it is written, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."‡ Do not lose the precious moments; walk earnestly in present duties; knowledge and assurance shall increase every step. You are weak—look up and read, "I will strengthen thee."§ You are perplexed—read once more, "I will guide thee."‖ You are anxious for the future—but he promises, "I will never leave thee." You are bereaved—"Sorrow not as others which have no hope; for them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."¶

* John, iii. 16. † Rev. xxii. 17. ‡ John, vii.17.
§ Isa. xli. 10. ‖ Psa xxxii. 8. ¶ 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.

Look thus at the Bible as a succession of sign-posts along your pilgrim road; simply trust and obey, you will soon find yourself in sight of the celestial city.

Thirty-Fifth Morning.

THE MYSTERIOUS FORWARD.

"Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward."—Exod. xiv. 15.

THE close and instructive analogy between Israel's redemption from Egypt, and the believer's redemption from the bondage of sin, has often been observed; but let us try and draw a few lessons from some passages in their history that seem especially designed for the encouragement of the afflicted Christian. What situation can be imagined more apparently hopeless than theirs immediately after their escape from slavery? At the very commencement of their journey, when their faith was yet unconfirmed, and their hearts still trembled with the thought of their recent oppression, they were brought into the barren wilderness, and stopped on the shores of an impassable sea.

Tremblingly they looked behind, and there was the cruel Pharaoh in the pride of his strength thirsting to lead them back to captivity. Their leader was indeed undaunted, but what a strange, inexplicable command he gives them from the Lord, "Go forward!" Forward! were they not on the furthest verge of possibility? Forward! what, into the foaming waves, into the depths of the pathless sea? Yes, the command is clear—"Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." Their extremity was God's opportunity. He shielded them from danger behind;* he opened a way before them; and the waters, which they looked upon as their grave, "were a wall unto then on their right hand, and on their left;"† and soon the song of triumph floated on the winds, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously."‡

Believer, can you be bestead more hardly than Israel? Is perplexity before you and fear behind? Still go forward. Pray on;

* Exod. xiv. 19. † Exod. xiv. 22. ‡ Exod. xv. 21,

hold fast by Jesus; do the duty of the present hour; take the next step onward, though you "walk in darkness;"* only "go forward," and ere long you shall cheerfully sing with your fellow-travellers—

"From Egypt lately come,
Where death and darkness reign,
We seek our new, our better home,
Where we our rest shall gain.
Hallelujah! we are on our way to God.

EVENING.

NO WATER.

"There was no water for the people to drink; wherefore the people did chide with Moses."—Exod. xvii. 1, 2.

Israel would have been well content to have lingered at Elim, where there "were twelve wells of water, and three-score and ten palm-trees."† We read nothing about their murmuring there, but the pillar of fire and cloud went onwards; for the Lord would not have them stop short of the land of promise;

* Isa. l. 10. † Exod. xv. 27.

it went onwards and led them into the wilderness of Sin. There poor Israel's faith faltered and failed. They murmured for bread, but then the Lord "rained down manna upon them, and gave them of the corn of heaven and of angels' food."* But the pillar of fire and cloud went onwards, and Israel pitched in Rephidim. There was no water to drink, and again their faith swerved and gave way under the pressure of trial. But they had not exhausted the loving-kindness of their God, "He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river."†

We have but a faint conception of the torture of thirst in eastern lands, or should perhaps frame readier excuses for ungrateful Israel. But, believer, art thou repining under spiritual thirst? oh, cease thy chiding and thy murmurs, and betake thee to thy Rock of ages; thence gushes the eternal well-spring of the water of life, and drinking there thou shalt never thirst again.‡

* Psa. lxxviii. 24, 25. † Psa. cv. 41. ‡ John, iv. 14.

Thirty-Sixty Morning.

AMALEK'S ONSET UPON WEARY ISRAEL.

"Remember what Amalek did unto thee . . . . how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary."—DEUT. xxv. 17, 18.

MANY a Christian has been most sorely assaulted by Satan in his hours of greatest physical weakness, and at such times has been grievously tempted to feel, "Surely I cannot truly be a child of God, or he would not suffer me to be thus smitten when least able to bear it." Let Israel's example cheer thee, my struggling fellow-pilgrim. Amalek, whom some have viewed as typical of Satan, was permitted to smite Israel when faint and weary; yet was Israel on that account not the chosen people of God? did Israel lose the battle? did Israel fail of the promised land?

And let Israel's mode of warfare with Amalek instruct thee. "When Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed,"* and when his hands were heavy, Aaron and Hur stayed them up until the going down of the sun. Gird on thy weapon of "all prayer;"

> "For Satan trembles when he sees
> The weakest saint upon his knees;"

and when thy hands are feeble, get thy brethren in the Lord to unite with thee, or unite for thee in earnest supplication, above all remembering how thy Advocate with the Father ever liveth to make intercession for thee; and the serried ranks of hell, like those of Amalek, shall be discomfited† beneath the resistless edge of "the prayer of faith."‡ Fight the good fight, and a greater than Joshua, the Captain of thy salvation, shall lead thee safely into "a better country, that is, an heavenly."§

* Exod. xvii. 11. † Exod. xvii. 13.
‡ James, v. 15. § Heb. xi. 16.

EVENING.

THE CIRCUITOUS ROUTE.

"And they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way."—NUMB. xxi. 4.

FEW things are more irksome to an impetuous mind than being constrained to take a wearisome and circuitous route, when an apparently straight and easy one lies open. Such constraint so crosses all our natural self-wisdom and self-indulgence, that it requires peculiar grace to yield cheerfully to this providential pressure. And at no time is the lesson more difficult than when we have lately been favored and cheered by spiritual successes. Israel had recently vanquished Arad the Canaanite, and destroyed his cities; but now, instead of being led straight into the land of promise, they were told to *compass* the land of Edom; and, moreover, they found no bread except the manna. Their faith again failed

them. They "spake against God, and against Moses."*

These things were written for our example. Let us take timely warning from their fall, and draw blessed encouragement from their after-history. At length Jordan was passed, and Canaan won. Let us honor the Lord by a cheerful confession: "Thou art leading me right, though leading me round;" and we shall find our souls thriving under the "light bread" of heaven, and discover unsuspected springs of consolation in the rocky wilderness.

* Numb. xxi. 5.

Thirty-Seventh Morning.

THE SWORD.

"We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."—Acts, xiv. 22.

THE gate of the kingdom, as it appears from this, can only be approached by the pathway of tribulation. Some, I grant you, like the dying thief, find the path very short; some have a lighter cross to bear than others; some seem to forget their cross in the bright anticipations of their crown. Yet still the witness of God standeth sure, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* How can it be otherwise? The carnal mind, which is enmity against God; the devil, who as a strong man armed keepeth his palace; the world, which lieth in wickedness—are all well content that a soul should be unawakened, un-

* 2 Tim. iii. 12.

washed, unsaved. But let the grace of God once enter that soul, and a new principle is implanted, as opposed as light to darkness. War is inevitable, compromise impossible. The darkness will seek to quench the light, the light will progressively scatter the darkness. Will grace find a single natural affection untainted? will grace abet any Satanic scheme? will grace patiently endure the corrupting seductions of the world? There must be conflict—sharp, painful, decisive conflict—till the soul, delivered from this present evil world, and now translated into the kingdom of grace, is brought hereafter into the kingdom of glory. There the struggle ceases, and must cease. When the child of light enters that world of everlasting light, he will need no more his armour, but only his white robe, his palm, and his harp.

EVENING.

THE PALM.

"Clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."
—Rev. vii. 9.

The blessed multitude here described were of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. How great was the variety of their calling and conversion! how manifold the diversity of their spiritual training! how wide asunder the hours and the accompaniments of their departure! Some were called in the dewy dawn, some in the noonday, some in the twilight evening of life; some lived in outward prosperity, and battled hard with inward temptation; while others, calm and tranquil within, endured a great fight of afflictions from without. Some sank to rest embosomed in human affection, others died girt with fire at the stake; some were summoned home from squalid poverty, while another forsook an earthly palace for a heavenly; and another clomb the sky with a chariot of fire and horses of fire. It is im-

possible to conceive experiences more diversified than their recorded history would exhibit. Yet two characteristics are alike in all. They are all white-robed, all palm-bearing. They have all been washed in blood; they have all fought a good fight, and won a goodly victory. Or, to translate it into apostolic language, they are all justified and all sanctified. And sanctification implies trial and triumph. Who repines, then, that he is constrained to wage a daily wār? None but soldiers stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, — white-robed, palm-bearing soldiers. Doubt not the issue; for "in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."*

* Rom. viii. 37.

Thirty-Eighth Morning.

THY HIDDEN ONES.

"They have consulted against thy hidden ones."—
PSA. lxxxiii. 3.

WE may draw sweet and almost inexhaustible instruction from the names given to the children of God in Scripture. This title of the Lord's hidden ones is full of consolation. How many a Lazarus is there whom the world in its giddy course of pride, or reclining in its purple luxury, disdains to feed with its superfluous crumbs! And at times the poor sufferer himself may make his moan, "I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind." It is so different to suffer in an amphitheatre of admiring spectators, and to languish in solitary grief, unwitnessed and unknown. Yet is this no unfrequent badge of discipleship. The ser-

vant is not greater than his Lord. He was despised and rejected of men. "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."* You see your calling then, concealed saint, one of the Lord's hidden ones,—hidden from the glare and glitter of the world, and the pomps and passions of life: hidden in respect of your tears and trials, your joys and felicities: hidden as to your true inalienable glory,—a child of God, an heir of blissful immortality; a king and priest unto our God forever. Yes, hidden now, and many stormy waves about you; but what a hiding-place. "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me."† Those who are admitted to the private apartments of their sovereign, are not wont to complain of their seclusion. And mark the next clause; "He shall set me up upon a rock." Those who are now hidden in the clefts of the Rock of ages, shall one day stand thereon and sing.

* 1 John, iii. 1. † Psa. xxvii. 5.

EVENING.

SECRET LIFE.

"Your life is hid with Christ in God."—Col. iii. 3.

Let us trace a little further the hidden well-spring of a Christian's life, for its forth-flowing streams are fresh and invigorating, even as cold waters to a thirsty soul. Would we, indeed, discover its original source, we must travel further than the "utmost bound of the everlasting hills,"* even to the recesses of a past eternity, wherein "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world;"† so that with David we must confess, "With thee is the fountain of life,"‡ hidden with Christ in God. But let us come to the earliest stage of our own experience of this life, the first pulse that quivered through our inanimate soul. Here too it is hidden with Christ in God; for God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love

* Gen. xlix. 26. † Eph. i. 3, 4. ‡ Psa. xxxvi. 9.

wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ:"* so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nor when animated and quickened could the soul maintain its life for one moment if this vital cord, in any part of its illimitable length, were broken or severed; "Because I live," says our Lord, "ye shall live also."† "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered."‡ While the man that abides in Christ is as a tree planted by the waters, that seeth not when heat cometh, but whose leaf is green; that is not careful in the year of drought, nor ceases from yielding fruit.§ O blessed hidden life, enveloped, and again enveloped in the depths of everlasting love; so hidden that neither godless man nor raging devil can discover its secret fountain, nor the icy grasp of death check its unobserved, uninterrupted flow. To depart is far better; for we only

* Eph. ii. 4, 5.
† John, xiv. 19.
‡ John, xv. 6.
§ Jer. xvii. 8.

draw nearer to the centre of our life—it is to be with Christ. And ere long the necessity for concealment shall be done away—ere long creation will hail "the manifestation of the sons of God;"* for "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory."†

* Rom. viii. 19. † Col. iii. 4.

Thirty-Ninth Morning.

THE ANGELS' SPECTACLE.

"We are made a spectacle . . to angels."—1 Cor. iv. 9.

CHISTIANS in general have to walk under the keen observation of the world. Many eyes watch for their halting. There are many Herods who fear them, knowing that they are just and holy, and *observe* them.* They made a spectacle to the world and to men; and herein have many an opportunity of glorifying the Captain of their salvation by faithful and soldier-like demeanor. But no saint, however secluded his retirement, is without spectators, who bend, upon every movement, the untiring gaze of angelic intelligence. "We are made a spectacle to angels." When first the weeping eye of faith was fixed upon a crucified Saviour, there was joy in the presence

* Mark, vi. 20

of the angels of God over that repenting sinner. Even of the little ones who believe in him, Christ declares, "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."* And as the pilgrim-soldier fights his way to Canaan, "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"† Nor is theirs a listless ministry; for "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places."‡ And round about every ransomed soul is there "war in heaven;" the blessed angels militant against the dragon and his angels, who fight though they prevail not.§ For thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. From which we may gather, that the seclusion of any child of God is more apparent than real; and when no human eye discerns the struggles

* Matt. xviii. 10.
† Heb. i. 14.
‡ Eph. vi. 12, margin.
§ Rev. xii. 7.

of his faith, and no human ear catches his whispered supplication, then may he be the object of intensest interest to the battling armies of heaven and hell. The restless murmur of impatience or unbelief awakens scoffs of fiendish triumph in the ranks of his malignant foes; while the low breathings of resignation and faith kindle the joyous gratulations of his angelic guards. And when the disembodied spirit forsakes its "ruined tent," at once they emerge from their viewless obscurity, and the deserted Lazarus is carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. Solitary believer, thou art not alone, for there be many with thee.

EVENING.

THE VIEWLESS CAMP.

"And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."—2 KINGS, vi. 17.

IF there were any question on which side of the contending spiritual armies might and

right preponderated, there would be nothing of consolation, nay there would be something exceedingly oppressive in the thought, that we were the objects of the sleepless vigilance of viewless and powerful spirits. Then might we be ready to exclaim with Elisha's servant, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?"* But we need not cast about for an answer. "Fear not," the prophet replies, "for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." And how inexplicable soever this might appear to his attendant, when the eye of sense was couched, and the scales fell before the prayer of faith, it was found to be nothing but the simple unadorned truth. The king of Syria came "with horses and chariots, and a great host."† But the King of heaven despatched an army of like description, but of immeasurably superior might: "horses and chariots of fire" encamping round about Elisha; and not a cloud of fear flung its shadow on the soul of the faithful prophet.

* 2 Kings, vi. 15. † 2 Kings, vi. 14.

Believer, you are, and will be to the end, surrounded with the hosts of heaven and of hell. Yet, be of good cheer, you are upon the conquering side; you can ask triumphantly with Job—"Is there any number of his armies?"* Think you that He, to whose rescue twelve legions of angels would have sped at the slightest permissive beck, will suffer you to lie exposed to the malignant powers of darkness?—nay, he hath given commandment to save you.†

* Job. xxv. 3. † Psa. lxxi. 3.

Fortieth Morning.

THE ALMIGHTY KEEPER.

"With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord, our God, to help us and to fight our battles."—2 CHRON. xxxii. 8.

WHATEVER comfort we may draw from the assurances which Scripture supplies, that the angels of God encamp round about us, and succor us in our spiritual warfare, still the Christian's *confidence* is not in these bulwarks, however strong, but in his impregnable rock, his fortress, his citadel, "whereunto he may continually resort,"* even in the omnipotence of the Lord his God. Many and mighty are the Goliaths of the rebel army who have fallen beneath the smooth stones of the shepherd's sling. How often has the half-stifled sob—"Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me;"†

* Psa. lxxi. 3. † Isa. xxxviii. 14.

the drowning cry—"Lord, save me;"* the wrestling ejaculation, "I believe; help thou mine unbelief;"† the tearful, trustful look upon the Friend of sinners, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. While we gratefully receive the Divine promises of angelic aid, and while, in Hezekiah's case, who confessed that the Lord alone could fight the battles of Israel, it still pleased him to use an angel's ministry for the overthrow of Assyria: far be from us any creature confidence, however lofty in the scale of creation the promised guard may stand. Shall we lift up our eyes unto the hills? Our help cometh from the Lord.‡ And resting on this guardianship, though we never go out but the path is strewn with snares, nor come in but our home is beleaguered with foes, who may redouble their efforts as we advance in holiness and draw nigh to heaven, still we can echo back the Psalmist's confidence: "The Lord shall preserve our going out and our coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."

* Matt. xiv. 30. † Mark, ix. 24. ‡ Psa. cxxi. 1, margin.

EVENING.

THE SYMPATHIZING SUFFERER.

"For in that he hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."—HEB. ii. 18.

IF there be one thing that a sensitive mind more shrinks from communicating than another, it is the history of its own inward conflicts. Truly has the poet traced the working of many a "mourner's wayward heart."

"Calm be the voice, the aspect bold,
No shuddering pass o'er lip or brow,
For why should innocence be told
The pangs that guilty spirits bow?
The loving eye that watches thine,
Close as the air that wraps thee round,
Why in thy sorrow should it pine,
Since never of thy sin it found?"

And none, perhaps, can describe, save those who have experienced it, the delight of meeting at such a time with an able, experienced Christian, who, divining by the true instinct of love the secret anguish of the heart, mentions, unsolicited, that he has passed through the

same conflict, and draws from his own experience the reply to every unconfessed temptation. Many waters cannot quench the love that will turn towards that "brother born for adversity."*

But whether or no the Lord may vouchsafe a human comforter for such an hour of tribulation, remember, tried and tempted disciple, that he himself is by your side, and bends his gracious ear to catch every whisper of your tremulous lips. Oh, shrink not from "pouring out" your heart before him; for hearken how, to elicit your confidence, he assures you that he was "in all points tempted like as you are," and is, therefore, "touched with the feeling of your infirmities,"† while, having baffled every temptation, he is able to succor you. Betake you to this Good Physician, for "he knows the wound that bleeds inwardly;" and though you come in the press behind, and touch but the hem of his garment, you shall be whole.‡

* Prov. xvii. 17. † Heb. iv. 15. ‡ Mark, v. 27

Forty-First Morning.

COLLECTIVE SUPPORT.

"And Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial."—Ex. xxviii. 12.

THESE names of the children of Israel were engraven upon two onyx stones, six upon each stone, and being fastened upon the ephod, were borne upon Aaron's shoulders when he went in to minister before the Lord. This has been with peculiar beauty interpreted to signify, how Jesus our great High Priest upholds his universal church by his omnipotence, and when he appears at the right hand of God for us, as our Mediator and Intercessor, bears the names of his people collectively before the Lord for a memorial. For the shoulder is the seat and emblem of strength;* and the names

* See Isa. ix. 6.

being thus unitedly engraven upon two stones of like nature, seems to manifest the equal and impartial regard he entertains towards his "whole family," his "one body," his "glorious church," his only "bride:"* and how all believers alike, of every century and every clime, rest only on his almightiness for support.

Weak and weary disciple, is there not "strong consolation" for you in this living type? You have no doubt of the safety of many eminent Christians, whose faith and holiness have often attracted your affectionate admiration. Yet consider, all their security lies in this, that they are upheld by Christ Jesus, that their names are borne upon the shoulders of their High Priest before the Lord for a memorial. Be of good cheer; their High Priest is yours; your name is engraven side by side with theirs on the same stones of remembrance; and remembering from whence your strength cometh, you can say with St. Paul, "When I am weak then, am I strong."†

* Ephes. iii. 15; iv. 4; v. 27. † 2 Cor. xii. 10.

EVENING.

INDIVIDUAL SYMPATHY.

"And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually."—Exod. xxviii. 29.

THE names, however, of Israel's sons were engraven twice upon the holy garments which were made "for Aaron for glory and for beauty:" once upon the two onyx stones of the ephod, and again separately on twelve different stones of the breastplate; and in this a most exquisite truth has been deciphered. When the idea to be conveyed was support by omnipotent strength, there was a peculiar propriety in the names being grouped together, all alike upheld upon the high priest's shoulder; but when we come to the throbbing affections of the heart, we seem to crave an individual place, a discriminating love: for "the heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy."* Now

* Prov. xiv. 10.

this is just supplied by the separate engraving on the twelve stones of the breastplate, each name by itself, each upon a different stone, though all were stones of price, and all bound closely upon the same beating heart. And "they were firmly set, not slightly put into the breastplate, for all the faithful were so firmly united unto Jesus Christ, that not the smallest jewel can be picked from the breastplate of our Aaron by the joint efforts of earth and hell."*

Blessed assurance, that the Saviour bends as undivided a regard upon every lamb and sheep of his fold, as if no other object engaged his infinite compassion! He identifies himself with "the least of his brethren:"† He shares their griefs, and catches their whispers, and pleads their cause at the right hand of the Majesty. "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."‡

* M'Ewen on the Types, book i. chap. viii.

† Matt. xxv. 40. ‡ Heb. iv. 16.

Forty-Second Morning.

ALTOGETHER LOVELY.

"Yea, he is altogether lovely."—Song v. 16.

It needs not to tell the believer that this is a description of Jesus. For as surely as a child, if his father be talked of, recognizes the first lineaments of his character; as surely as a wife discovers far off the portrait of her husband, so surely will the church discover and recognize, in One who is declared to be altogether lovely, her Beloved, her Saviour, her Lord. Other persons, other things may have points of loveliness about them, and, though all the beauty of earth is clouded with sin, may be said to be lovely in this or the other particular. But One who is altogether lovely, within and without, in wisdom, in power, in love, now and forever; this can be none other than Jesus; this is, this must be the Lord.

To muse upon his loveliness is indeed the cream of all meditation; it is handling the diamond among jewels, and examining the rose among the flowers; nay, it is beyond compare. Draughts from this well-spring satisfy and exhilarate. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when I meditate on thee in the night watches."* "My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord."† The loveliness of Jesus is indeed an inexhaustible theme; it is like gazing on the clear blue sky at noon day, or the starry firmament at night; there is no bound, no limit; and the closer we gaze, and the greater assistance we derive from science, only new and endless glories disclose themselves in the unfathomable heavens. Yet, fainting believer, be not repelled by the infinity of the object; refuse not to climb the mountain, because its heights are lost in unattainable light; for, though you scale not the summit, your horizon shall widen at every step; you shall

* Psa. lxiii. 5, 6. † Psa. civ. 34.

see the loveliness of his omnipotence, which is placed on your side; of his infinite wisdom, which is stored up for you; of his unutterable grace, which descends from the highest, and stoops to the lowest, and seals every other attribute as your own; and of his eternity, during the past ages of which "he chose you before the foundation of the world,"* and whose future ages you shall share with him in glory. Take with you the telescope of faith, gaze long and eagerly, for the views are ravishing, and the prospect boundless, though now, at best, "we see through a glass darkly."†

EVENING.

JESUS, MY BELOVED.

"This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."—SONG v. 16.

AN American traveller, wandering through the cells in Lambeth palace, in which the mar-

* Ephes. i. 4. † 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

tyrs of Jesus had once been confined, deciphered these words traced upon the wall, *Jesus amor meus;* "Jesus my love." No record remains of that now sleeping, once suffering saint; but what a volume do those three words disclose. Is it not like being admitted to the inner prison at Philippi, where "at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God?"* The night might be dark and starless, the chain heavy, the prison loathsome; but he who could write, "*Jesus amor meus,*" had "a song as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept;"† he basked in a better sunshine, for "the Lord made his face to shine upon him:"‡ he breathed a nobler freedom, even "the glorious liberty of the children of God:"§ he dwelt in a kinglier mansion, for he kept himself "in the love of God."‖

My suffering brother, can you say of this altogether lovely Saviour, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend?" How does

* Acts, xvi. 25. † Isa. xxx. 29. ‡ Num. vi. 25.
§ Rom. viii. 21. ‖ Jude, 21.

this a thousand time outweigh the lighter afflictions we are passing through! We can easily credit the happiness of the Lambeth captive. But if we would realize it ourselves, we must, as he did, make Jesus our Friend,—share every thought with him, breathe into his ear every anxiety, rest on his promises, and thirst for his presence.

Forty-Third Morning.

THE PERPLEXING ALTERNATIVE.

"Yet what I shall choose I wot not."—PHIL. i. 22.

A WISE and tender parent had two sons, and knowing that, from his position, they would be called in riper years to fill influential positions in the state, he selected a school for for them with the utmost care, where the discipline and instruction were exactly suited to mould their future characters. . One of his children, deeply impressed with his father's wisdom and love, never gave himself a moment's anxiety concerning his lot, but submitted with a cheerful zest to every regulation. Not so, however, with the other; for, though his heart was not less finely strung, nor his mind less nobly formed, he was haunted by a continual impression that his father could never have designed them to forego so many

indulgences, and endure such manifold hardships. So, after much inward conflict, he determined to write his father a full statement of his discomfort and disquietude. His father's answer not a little startled him. It ran thus: "My son, carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages of remaining at, or leaving your present position, and if you decide to return, come home immediately; you have my free permission." When the choice was thus unexpectedly thrown upon himself, the poor lad was involved in a labyrinth of perplexity. On the one hand, escape from his scholastic yoke was very inviting, and the thought of being with his beloved father, filled him with joy; but again he considered, "What if, in after-life, I should be called, with an unfurnished mind, to fill a position for which I am quite unequal?" The embarrassment, while it lasted, was torturing, as the advantages, now of one decision, now of another, appeared to preponderate; nor could he in any wise resolve his doubts, until he opened his mind to his brother.

His counsel was, that as their father must, from his vast experience and discrimination, know far better than they possibly could the balancing benefits of home or school, he should even refer the choice back again to his parental wisdom. This, with a certain shamefacedness, when he reflected that now his original position would be in no wise altered, he resolved to do. But the lesson was one he never forgot, for, ever after, while cheerfully applying to his present duties, he felt an unwavering assurance that he should be summoned home the earliest moment, which a judgment far superior to his own saw best for the promotion of his true interests.

Even the Apostle Paul felt the perplexity of choosing between life and death; though his singleness of eye marvellously helped him here, for he could unfeignedly declare, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* How thankfully may we repose in the blessed certainty, "My times are in thy hand."†

* Phil. i. 21. † Psa. xxxi. 15.

EVENING.

THE CHOICE REFUSED.

"Thy will be done."—MATT. vi. 10.

THE same principle that concerns the hour of our departure, applies to every daily providence. Our difficulties would be immeasurably increased, if the choice between possible alternatives were left with us. Let us freely grant, with St. Paul, that the present affliction is not "joyous, but grievous;"* yet, were the Lord to bid us choose between ease and suffering—between riches and penury—between solitude and society—dare we take upon ourselves the responsibility of deciding questions that might affect the glory of Jesus, and our own highest interests? Nay, we must refer it back again to the Lord, saying, "Choose for me; thy will be done." How stands the case, then? Why, the decision of our lot is with Him in whose hands, if we reflected for a mo-

* Heb. xii. 11.

ment, we should, with all speed, place it and leave it. Why are we, then, like the disciples in the tempest, "so fearful?" Alas! the name whereby Jesus addressed them befits us—"O ye of little faith!"* Oh that we might learn to breathe his own confiding prayer, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."†

* Matt. viii. 26. † Matt. xxvi. 39

Forty-Fourth Morning.

HOME SICKNESS.

"Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee."—LUKE, viii. 38, 39.

WHO can wonder at the request of the poor maniac of Gadara? Long while possessed by a legion of evil spirits, night and day had he wandered in the mountains and tombs, seeking rest and finding none. Vainly had he been bound with fetters and chains, for, with a strength beyond his own, he rent them asunder. But now he had a Saviour; the spirits had quailed and fled before the Prince of life; the storm of his soul was hushed, and there was a great calm; he sat like the gentle Mary at the feet of Jesus, and heard his word. Blessed change! he was a new creature. Who

marvels at his instinctive entreaty henceforth to live and die in the presence of his beloved Deliverer?

And does not as mighty, though less visible, a change pass over every soul that is truly born of God? A child of wrath, led captive by Satan at his will, the unconverted man wandered far from his Father's house amid the sepulchral desolations of sorrow and of sin; nor could all the appliances which human ingenuity might devise, control or cast out the evil passions of his heart. But in "the time of love," his Saviour passed by him, and said unto him, "Live;"* and the powers of darkness and of death yielded to the serene omnipotence of that voice; his heart was opened, and Jesus entered by his Spirit, diffusing light and peace through every benighted chamber of the soul. Can we wonder if such a soul long to be translated at once to the presence of its newly-found Master? for a single glance into futurity reveals temptations

* Ezek. xvii. 6. 8.

and trials, sins and snares, thickly besetting the pilgrim path; and the new man longs for holiness, while the old is ready to strike a traitorous league with corruption without. The prospect has appalled many a veteran,* and who shall marvel if the young disciple beseeches Jesus that he may be with him, and behold his glory?

Yet Jesus sent the healed demoniac away. He had a work for him to do, a Saviour to tell of, a story of experienced grace to publish. "Return to thine own house;" go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. Oh, surely, we shall meet with some fruits of this mission of mercy in glory; and one and another from Decapolis will tell how they first heard from the cured demoniac of a Saviour's power, and sympathy, and love.

Suffering believer, are you longing for your release? Is there no brother or sister, no

* Psa. lv. 3–8.

friend, no attendant or nurse, to whom you can tell the story of your salvation, and relate, with the untaught eloquence of feeling, how the Lord had compassion on you? Would not another jewel in your Saviour's crown, a spiritual child of your own, be worth months —yes, years of waiting? At all events, Jesus suffers you not yet to be with him in glory, but detains you as he detained this man, "at home with his friends." May it not be for a like reason?

EVENING.

HOME WELCOME.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."—JOHN, xvii. 24.

THE desire of a newly-awakened soul to be at once with Christ, is not wrong in kind, but only in date. It anticipates the Master's call, (and until his will is plain, ours must be pliant) but anticipates it at the longest only

by a few years. For his promise is as certain as it is cheering—"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be."* Nay, we are continually encouraged to "set our affections" on this time of perfected communion with our Saviour, "looking for that blessed hope" † when we shall ever be with the Lord. Only let us keep our desires in harmonious subordination to the mind of Christ, and as soon as his good pleasure has been wrought in us, and by us, his will to have us with him will give life and efficacy to our will to be with him; and whether found among the quick or dead at his appearing, will draw us by an irresistible attraction in all the perfections of the spiritual body to his presence wherein is "fulness of joy," and to his right hand, where there are "pleasures for evermore."‡

* John, xii. 26. † Tit. ii. 13. ‡ Psa. xvi. 11.

Forty-Fifth Morning.

COMMUNION IN THE FURNACE.

"And the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."—DAN. iii. 25

WHAT an unexpected greeting must this have been to the three children! What a joyful surprise! What a marvellous place to meet and hold communion with Jesus,—the midst of a burning fiery furnace, heated seven times more that it was wont to be heated! That he should join the two disciples in their evening walk to Emmaus seems more reasonable, but who could dream that he would reveal himself here? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, though exposed to the scorching anger of the king of Babylon, staggered not at the faithfulness of God, but, with an invincible strength of faith, grasped deliverance ere it came, saying, "Our God will deliver us out of

thy hand, O king." Yet, I question whether, amid all their unflinching confidence, they anticipated such a time of fellowship as the God they served was preparing for them. They were driven from the throne of Nebuchadnezzar, and cast out from the society of men, but it was only to enter the presence of the Lord, and to hold intercourse with the King of kings. Methinks they must have been right sorry to hear the royal mandate, "Come forth, and come hither;" yet they asked not miraculous preservation when no longer needful; but came forth refreshed from the furnace, their bonds alone consumed, to serve the Master they had seen with new alacrity in the high duties of their station.

Afflicted saints! three lessons lie here upon the surface for you; and many others will be dug up if you work the mine, for the vein of ore is rich; but these three are manifest. (1.) Declare unhesitatingly your final deliverance —it glorifies God, abashes Satan, strengthens your brethren, and cheers yourself. (2.) Be

encouraged by the example of the three children to look for special manifestations of Christ's presence in affliction. Plead the promise which they realized.* Seek Jesus, and you shall find him. (3.) When he removes the trial, cheerfully betake thee to the active duties of life. Be not so enamored of the fellowship in the furnace, as idly to hang back when he calls thee forth. His viewless presence shall be with thee still; and though in the world thou hast tribulation, still in him thou shalt have peace.†

EVENING.

SUSPEND YOUR JUDGMENT.

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."—Rom. viii. 28.

There is so much in that expression, "work together." If you view some isolated portions

* Isa. xliii. 2. † John, xvi. 33.

of the Christian's training, they may appear most mysterious; but if we will be content to "take it on trust a little while," till the Master's work is finished, we shall then, with overflowing gratitude, confess, "It is good, very good."* A skilful artist works the brighest and the darkest hues into one harmonious picture; but if many of those who are in ecstasy with his perfected chef d'œuvre had seen it in the process of painting, when he was plentifully applying sombre colors and cold neutral tints to throw parts of the landscape into shadow, they would have been ready to exclaim, he was marring if not ruining his work. "We are his workmanship;"† but at present we know but "in part,"‡ while our attention is of necessity engrossed by that fragment of the new creation which, if we may so speak, is passing through the Lord's hands. When we awake up after his likeness, we shall acknowledge with adoring love how sunshine and sorrow, "gloom and glow," temptations

* Gen. i. 31. † Ephes. ii. 10. ‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

and triumphs, all worked together to form the spotless bliss of glory. We shall then discern that we could no more have done without the trials than the mercies of our pilgrimage; and shall bless the faithful love which inflicted a momentary pain for an eternal issue of a blessing. Doubtless we shall confess it then; but herein is faith, joyfully to confess it now.

Forty-Sixth Morning.

THE FETTERED RACER.

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—PHIL. iii. 14.

IN what position was St. Paul when he speaks of himself as thus ardently and urgently pressing on?* A prisoner at Rome, shackled with bonds† for Christ's sake, dwelling "with a soldier that kept him"‡ in constant restraint. There is something most ennobling in the triumph of the spirit over the body, which enabled him, when thus manacled and imprisoned, to realize that he was a racer in an arduous race, pressing forward with an intensity of holy emulation for the prize of his high calling. How easily might he, when stopped by violence in the midst of his apostolic career,

* See Claude's remarks on this, in his Essay on Sermons, p. 70. † Phil. i. 13. ‡ Acts, xxviii. 16.

have resigned himself to intellectual ease, and plausibly argued that, as the active labors of the church must now be carried on by others, he was called to rest from his unparalleled exertions, and calmly enjoy the quietude, though not the freedom of his hired house at Rome. But see him in that prison lodging, working out his own salvation with fear and trembling; fighting the inward fight; following after; apprehending that for which he was apprehended of Christ Jesus. See him burning with anxiety for the souls of others, reasoning with the Jews, preaching the kingdom* to all who came, praying night and day for his converts, weeping over the enemies of the cross,† having great conflict even for those he had never seen,‡ and writing those epistles which have ever proved inexhaustible springs of consolation to the church of Christ.§ Perhaps no two years of his life were laden

* Acts, xxviii. 31. † Phil. iii. 18. ‡ Col. ii. 1.

§ The Epistles to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Philippians.

with richer fruits of holiness and usefulness than those of his imprisonment at Rome. It was so with Luther at Wartburg. Suffering saint, it may be so, in your measure, with you in your retirement.

EVENING.

THE PRIZE WON.

"So run that ye may obtain."—1 Cor. ix. 24

The example of the apostle Paul, then, proves that the charge to run and to fight belongs not only to those who are on the open arena and battle-field of active service, but also to those confined in the prison-house of persecution, or the lonely chamber of affliction. They too are racers in the heavenly course, and soldiers in the good fight of faith. Settle it then in your mind, that, whatever your position, the inspiriting command is intended for you, "So run, that ye may obtain."

But you say, "I am not a Paul: I have neither his gifts, his apostleship, nor his inspiration." True; but "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."* Seek to attain his singleness of eye and heart; and though you have but few talents where he had many, you may lay them out *at the same rate of interest*, and receive the same welcome commendation. It is worthy of all note, that the servant who had doubled his two talents was greeted with precisely the same terms of approval, as he who had doubled his five. "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."† We are not here contending against degrees in glory, which truth seems plainly taught by another similar parable, that of the pounds; where one servant is placed over ten cities, and another over five, according to their improvement of

* 2 Cor. viii. 12. † Matt. xxv. 23.

respective trusts.* But by the parable of the talents we are plainly taught, that they who faithfully "occupy" with few gifts as with many, shall equally "have praise of God,"† and all alike shall "enter into the joy of their Lord." What more could the most ardent racer obtain, the most glowing Christian anticipate, than his Master's approval and his Master's joy? Oh, let us then so run, not as uncertainly, but "with patience," that we may obtain.

* See Luke, xix. 12–19. † 1 Cor. iv. 5.

Forty-Seventh Morning.

SIMPLICITY OF PRINCIPLE.

"If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."—MATT. vi. 22.

WE have seen that it is not the richness of gifts, nor the variety of endowments, which the Lord chiefly regards, but the fidelity with which the talents he has given are employed. How unspeakably important, then, to seize the right guiding principle, and to work it out in those fields which produce the largest return. What, then, has given singleness of eye to St. Paul, and the holiest men of all ages? Simply this—they lived for the glory of Christ. To them "to live was Christ;" Christ was their life. Take Christ away, and life would have had no meaning, no interest for them. And how did they work out this principle? They

clearly perceived that, as ransomed sinners, they could most advance their Saviour's glory by the highest attainment of personal holiness, and by the widest diffusion of his gospel in their power. To these two objects, accordingly—which mutually act and re-act upon each other—they bent all the strength of their understanding, will, and affections; for they saw that other things, as business, influence, intellectual superiority, except for their bearing upon the cause of Christ, would never stand the shock of death; and, therefore, that their Master's glory could not be reflected from these things through the endless ages of eternity. Therefore, one evil passion overcome, one holy affection implanted, was more valued by them than any worldly acquisition; and they rejoiced more to bring a sinner to the foot of the cross, than to receive the fame and riches of the universe. This one principle disentangled a thousand perplexities for them, and gave that beautiful evenness and simplicity to their life, which so attracts our sym-

pathy. Whether called to work or to suffer, to be preachers or prisoners, still "one thing they did;" for the shifting circumstances of life were only so many changing scenes, whereon to develop their one unchanging principle—"to live for Christ."

EVENING.

MULTIPLICITY OF DETAILS.

"She hath done what she could."—MARK, xiv. 8.

BUT you say, "Were they not for the most part employed in such great works, as the conversion of the heathen, or the ministry of the word? The very grandeur of their pursuits gave a dignity to their life; while my mind is distracted by the innumerable littlenesses and fretting interruptions of a sick-chamber." This objection is, I am persuaded, more apparent than solid. We view their life as a whole; and, therefore, our impressions of it have an

air of completeness; but, could we descend to the particularities of every day, could we stand by St. Paul in the workshop at Corinth, we should discern how it was principle carried out into the smallest matters that gave unity to their course. Nothing is trivial with God that is a test of character. The plucking of an apple brought sin and death into the world. A cup of cold water, rightly given, shall not lose its reward. "The Lord weigheth the spirits,"* day by day, in the even balances of infinite wisdom. He is weighing our spirits to see what judgment we shall form, or how we shall speak, or act, in the varying circumstances of every hour. He does not require the administration of talents which he has not bestowed; but every day may some holy disposition be fostered, some winged prayer be breathed, some gracious word be dropped. And none of these things elude his observation, who said of the lowly Mary, "She hath done what she could."

* Prov. xvi. 2.

Forty-Eighth Morning.

HANDIWORK.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."—MATT. xxv. 40.

THERE is no more effectual way of relieving the tedium of a lengthened illness, and sometimes of dissipating the gloom and despondency, than some little work of practical utility which requires only so much of exertion or thought as is within the sick man's limited powers. The inexperienced may easily refuse such apparently slender aid; but the keenest intellects have ever been the first to allow how dependent the mind is upon physical occupations. Dr. Chalmers writes in his Journal: "It is not my duty to feel cool and comfortable when placed in a confined room; but it is my duty to rise and open the window if this can

restore me to my wonted capacity of exertion. It is, perhaps, not my duty to summon up a cheerfulness of mind in the hour of unaccountable despondency; . . . . but it is my duty to study, and if possible to devise, expedients for restoring me from this . . . . state."* And he goes on to advise some slight occupation as the unfailing expedient, such as "writing a fair copy of any old production, setting your books and papers in order, balancing your accounts, etc."

May not the long-afflicted Christian take up this suggestion, and employ it in the service of cheerful charity? If you know anything of your own neighborhood, there are probably many cases of poverty and distress close at hand, which in planning to relieve, you might employ many a weary hour. Believe me, the basket of provision, or the parcel of apparel you have provided with your own hands, will cheer another sufferer beside the poor cottager to whom you send it. And if you know not

* Chalmers' Life, vol. i. p. 165.

of suitable objects near you, so many blessed societies now penetrate every haunt of misery and sin, that if you will but make yourself acquainted with their touching reports, and then *with your own hands*, perhaps by the proceeds of your needle or your pencil, minister to their necessities, you will shortly find that you identify yourself with their work. If not yourself the good Samaritan, you filled his wine-flask, and replenished his cruse of oil. And thus days that would have wearily "dragged through," if the mind had been preying on itself, will, almost unawares, glide by in such ministries of love. If the author of this little book only persuaded one sufferer to make this a matter of persevering toil, he should feel it a cause for deep thankfulness; for he is fully convinced how successful is the expedient, and how grateful the effort to Him who will welcome his wondering children with the words, "Ye have done it unto me."

EVENING.

TRADE WITH PENCE.

"Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance."—MATT. xiii. 12.

IT is with charity as with the other graces of the gospel: Christianity is not a plain, but a mountain; not a passage, but a staircase. Every step we attain in faith and love is a starting point for something higher. "The way of life is above to the wise." And so we shall find that if we faithfully use the opportunities of usefulness which the Lord affords, though perhaps they may seem very few and scanty now, He will give more. This is his prerogative, "He giveth more grace."* There are very few Christians, however deeply tried, however severe their sufferings, who might not with the ingenuity of love discover some thing they might *do* themselves for Christ's cause and people, some crevice into which the

* James, iv. 6.

wedge of charity might be inserted. Trade with these pence, and pounds shall be entrusted to you: for "he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."

Forty-Ninth Morning.

WORK REWARDED.

"He shall reward every man according to his works."—MATT. xvi. 27.

THE gracious "promise"* of the reward according to works, when apprehended by a lively faith, which builds entirely on the finished work of Jesus for pardon and acceptance, is one of peculiar comfort to the much-laboring, or the much-suffering believer. As a faithful living witness writes: "It sustains under all suffering, by the conviction, that its full fruit will be yielded, and its full results reaped hereafter. Many seem to suffer as if they should be none the gainers, and as if the results will be just the same as in the case of their friends and neighbors, who have been exposed to no such trials. Hence

* See Psa. lxii. 12

they often seem to feel a sort of Christian *fatalism*, if we may be allowed the expression: 'I have no doubt it will be for my good; I am sure I need it;' and so on, without any intelligent idea in what they are to be the better, when there can be no question that, in an ordinary way, they are gaining much by such trials, and that they will reap much hereafter which they never would have reaped without them. Active labor and patient suffering are thus each working out their blessed fruits in their own way."*

Therefore in entreating any sufferers, both for their own sake and the cause of Christ, to labor *as far as* their physical powers permit, I would beg them to remember again, "They also serve who only stand and wait;" that suffering is accounted work for Christ, because it fulfils his will; that it is a proof of our sonship;† a pledge of our discipleship;"‡ an earnest of our crown and kingdom;§ and that,

* "Good Things to come," p. 360: Sermon, by Rev. C. J. Goodheart, of Reading.

† Heb. xii. 8. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 21. § 2 Tim. ii. 12.

in the emphatic language of St. Paul, "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory."*

EVENING.

UNEQUAL COMPARISONS.

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."—ROM. viii. 18.

How blissful an employment will it be hereafter, in the mansions of the kingdom, to place the past sufferings and the present glory side by side, when at every stage of the comparison we are constrained to break out into astonishment and delight, "Who would have imagined such an issue? how little now do my trials appear! who would not have passed through fifty times as much of sorrow to reach this blessed land? Ah, that illness; that disappointment;

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

that loss: I see now wherefore it was sent: all was mercy. How could I ever be so impatient and disquieted! how little I knew its fruit! Hallelujah! for the sorrows, as for the joys of my pilgrimage, again I say, Hallelujah!" Again, how shall we contrast every earthly grief with its heavenly counterpart of glory? once pilgrims, now possessors; once warriors, now victors; once wrestling, now resting; once sighing, now singing; even as the prophet so exquisitely foretells that appointed portion which the Saviour should confer on those who mourn in Zion, even "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." *

* Isa. lxi. 3.

Fiftieth Morning.

IF NEED BE.

"If need be."—1 Pet i. 6.

WHEREIN did the absolute necessity lie for these "manifold temptations?" Had not the apostle just spoken of those to whom he wrote as "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus;* as born "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away;"† as "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation?"‡ Surely if any believers might have an unwavering assurance of their own final salvation, they might whom an inspired apostle addressed in such words as these. Yea, doubtless they were perfectly

* 1 Pet. i. 2. † 1 Pet. i. 4. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 5.

safe; they were the sheep of Christ who should never perish;* their names were in the book of life. How then does he say of them, "though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold trials?" We may learn from this, that simple salvation—that is, escape from wrath and admission into heaven—is by no means the whole of God's counsel of love towards each redeemed soul. There was a "need be" for these many and fiery trials, ay, for their feeling the accumulated weight of them, and being in heaviness on account of them. What was this need be? Probably much of the infinite wisdom which saw trial indispensable, though we know not now, we shall know hereafter; part may never be revealed, but thus much we are told even now, it was "that the trial of their faith, though tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."† Unto their praise, or Christ's? First unto Christ's praise and

* John, x. 28. † 1 Pet. i. 7.

glory, and from him reflected in them, when "he shall come to be glorified *in his saints*."‡ Suffering believer, though "elect, begotten again, kept unto salvation," what stronger assurance can you ask of the "need be" of the trial that is weighing you down, than this —it shall result in the increase of your Saviour's glory, and of yours in him?

EVENING.

TRUSTFULNESS.

"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."—MATT. xxvi. 39.

PERHAPS some afflicted saint has been cast down at the issue of earnest and united prayer on his behalf. He reads the free, unconditional promises made to believing prayer; "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."† He calculates on the security of his Sa-

* 2 Thess. i. 10. † John, xiv. 14.

viour's pledged word, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."* He betakes himself to earnest prayer; he engages the petitions of the faithful on his behalf; he looks for an answer of peace, perhaps recovery from some painful illness, the dispersion of some spiritual cloud, the restoration of some beloved friend. I grant you that in very many cases the prayers are granted according to "his heart's desire" and "the request of the lips,"† and that they would be so granted much oftener if we received the promises in their plain, literal simplicity and freeness. But yet, sometimes, in spite of faith and prayer, the suffering continues, the darkness still is felt, the beloved one dies.

Shall we for a moment entertain the whispered suggestion of unbelief? Where is the use of all your painstaking, and all your petitions? Nay; God forbid. We are content

* Matt. xviii. 19. † Psa. xxi. 2.

to bide the verdict of eternity. But this prayer of our Redeemer, in his hour of overwhelming agony, gives us, even now, a glimpse into "the deep things of God."* If it had been possible in the counsels of the Infinite Power, and Love, and Wisdom, the cup would have passed from Jesus' lips; but it was not possible, and the prayer of the Son of God himself is only answered according to its closing words of Divine resignation, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Suffering believer! if it be possible, if consistent with the highest glory of God and good of men, thy suit shall be answered in the very form thou art urging it; but, if not, oh think not it is unheard and unanswered. It will bring down a yet richer blessing. The cup of wrath passed not from Jesus, but the draining of that cup presented the cup of salvation to the lips of dying sinners. Thy request may be apparently refused; but the faith which offered it is appreciated above, and is obtaining for thee "an over-payment of delight."

* 1 Cor. ii. 10.

Fifty-First Morning.

THE "BUT NOTS" OF SCRIPTURE.

"Troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."—2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.

Fainting Christian, observe the "but nots" of this passage. The tribulation was very severe, but there was a certain point which it did not exceed; the tide of trouble was very high, but there was a limit, at which it was said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed;"* and this point, this limit, was not beyond, but within the grace and strength imparted. Has it not been so with the saints of every age? Look at Joseph in prison, Israel in Egypt, David in the cave, Daniel in the den, the three

* Job, xxxviii. 11.

children in the furnace—all were troubled, perplexed, persecuted, cast down; and yet, in each case, there was a "but not," and a limit; and we, who can survey the whole chart of their lives, see how this boundary line was so placed by Infinite Wisdom, that they were never quite overborne, and that from the very extremity of their trial sprang their brightest deliverances, and most lasting blessings. Nay, more; has it not been so with yourself, fellow-pilgrim, in days past? Look backward; you will see many troubles, perplexities, persecutions, falls; but what I ask is this, Has any previous trial been *too* great? The waters have been very deep, but have you ever *sunk* under them? Has there not always been a gracious "but not"? Oh, say not, after so many deliverances, with David in his despondency, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul;"* but imbibe his cheerful confidence when he pleads—"Thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my

* 1 Sam. xxvii. 1.

feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?"*

EVENING.

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE.

"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom."—2 Tim. iv. 18.

Yes, these "but nots" shall continue all the way through. Trials will beset your road, but not insurmountable trials; a passage shall be made through, or over them. Temptations shall befall you, but not unbearable temptations; for "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it."† The waters of death may flow deep and rough, but "not overflow thee;"‡ for "the Lord shall deliver thee from every evil, and

* Psa. lvi. 13. † 1 Cor. x. 13. ‡ Isa. xliii. 2.

preserve thee unto his heavenly kingdom." So writes Paul the aged, when the time of his departure was at hand. Some years before he had expressed the same confidence in that God, "who delivered, doth deliver, and will yet deliver;"* he was not disappointed of his hope; in nothing had he been ashamed; every year but strengthened his confidence; and now, after another signal deliverance "out of the mouth of the lion,"† without a shadow of distrust, he looks forward, even to the end, and cheerfully asserts no evil would be permitted to bar his entrance into the heavenly kingdom. Past, present, future, were alike radiant with mercy; for he realized his own glowing assurance, "All things are yours; the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."‡

* 2 Cor. i. 10. † 2 Tim. iv. 17. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 21–23.

Fifty-Second Morning.

THE VICTORY OF FAITH.

"Thou shalt deal bountifully with me."—Psa. cxlii. 7.

THESE words honored God. David was in the cave, praying and pouring out complaints. His "spirit was overwhelmed;"* "refuge failed" him;† he was "brought very low;" the cry was wrung from him—"Deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I."‡ And even "whiles he was speaking in prayer,"§ the Spirit descends; he is strengthened with might in the inner man; and from the dark cavern of Adullam rises the shout of victory, "Thou shalt deal bountifully with me." Oh, what honor this put upon God's faithfulness! When a child is seated on its

* Psa. cxlii. 3.
† Psa. cxlii. 4.
‡ Psa. cxlii. 6.
§ Dan. ix. 21.

father's knee, and says, "I am afraid of nothing," the parent delights in its happiness and love; but when the father leaves his child alone, and says, "Fear nothing, for I shall come for you;" and the minutes pass by, and the time seems long, and the little one's heart is full, and yet he says, "I will not fear, for father said he would come;"—would not these words overheard send a keener thrill of pleasure through that parent's breast? What gave the psalmist this blessed confidence? He knew the bountiful heart of the God he served,—that he had all power, riches, wisdom, and willingness. He knew his own pitiful condition, that it would appeal to the tender compassion of the Lord. He remembered, doubtless, former deliverances,—the lion and the bear; the sword of Goliath, and the javelin of Saul, till his complaining was lost in praise: "Thou shalt deal bountifully with me." Did David miscalculate? Let his throne and kingdom reply.

O believer, will you not honor God by a

like affiance? Have not you the same Father? are not you in touching sorrow? have not you been holpen in days past? No voice, though it be broken with weeping, will sound sweeter in the ears of the Lord than this—"Thou shalt deal bountifully with me."

EVENING.

THE VICTORY OF FACT.

"Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee,"—PSA. cxvi. 7.

WE have seen the victory of faith; now anticipate the victory of fact. Transport yourself a little forward. Perhaps in a few days or weeks the immediate trial that presses upon you may have passed over; and, looking back upon the retiring cloud, you may be able to say, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." But take it at its worst,—say that your grief is a life-long trial; that you must be a sufferer

all your days; that your losses are those time cannot restore,—still, only transport yourself a little further. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand;"* joyful tidings to one who, on the bed of tossing and of weariness, watches "for the morning!"† they are meant for you. "There remaineth a rest to the people of God;"‡ and all along the blissful ages of that eternal Sabbath—in the calm possession of unutterable joy, in the present enjoyment of that everlasting "massive" glory, in the perfect fruition of overflowing love, in the society of heaven, and in the presence of God, your voice shall be heard amid the hymns of heaven: "I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me."§

* Rom. xiii. 12. † Psa. cxxx. 6.
‡ Heb. iv. 9. § Psa. iii. 6.

I.

"Consider Him," etc.

HEBREWS, xii. 3.

AND art thou faint with weariness,
  With suffering, want, or woe?
Faint through affliction's sharp distress,
  Or strugglings with the foe?

Have fiery darts on thee been hurl'd?
  Is all thy cross within?
Or art thou groaning for a world
  Of sinners and of sin?

Have clouds conceal'd thy Saviour's face?
  Has darkness wrapt thy path?
Why art thou weeping, child of grace?
  Why trembling, child of faith?

Oh pilgrim, raise thy drooping eye
  From off that stormy sea;

Consider Him, who came to die,
  And bear his cross for thee.

Bitter the wormwood and the gall,
  And sharp the spear and crown,
And worse, a million-fold, than all,
  His Father's righteous frown.

Muse on him, suffering saint, until
  The sight enable thee
To do or suffer all his will,
  Whate'er that will may be.

II.

"Jesus Christ the same."

HEBREWS, xiii. 8.

WE here have no abiding home,
  We claim no fatherland; but, driven
By life's rough changes, onward roam,
  Earth's pilgrims, denizens of heaven.

Yes, all things change around us; years
  Fleet on, and comrades pass away;
The shadows of this vale of tears
  Speed past us, nor will brook delay.

How blessed on this changing sea,
  Whose sleepless waters sink and swell,
To know one rock of truth to be
  Unchanging and unchangeable.

Jesus, our God and Saviour thou!
  The same from endless ages past,
The same in grace and glory now,
  And while eternity shall last.

III.

"Arise ye."

MICAH, ii. 10.

"ARISE ye, and depart,
  For this is not your home."
Dear place then, lovely as thou art,
  Farewell, for we must roam.

Yet seemed'st thou fresh and fair,
  A home of light and love,
Brightened with blessings everywhere,
  About us and above.

Oh, linger not, nor look
  So sad, so half-resigned:
For sin, upon earth's fairest nook,
  Hath left its trail behind.

Death snatches by surprise
  Your loved ones hence away,
The circle gathers in the skies,
  And will ye, can ye stay?

"Arise ye, and depart"
  To your eternal home;
"Arise," and cheer your drooping heart
  With better things to come.

IV.

"Thou art my rock."

PSALMS, lxxi. 3.

O JESUS, Saviour of the lost,
  My Rock and Hiding-place;
By storms of sin and sorrow tost,
  I seek thy sheltering grace.

Guilty, forgive me, Lord, I cry;
  Pursued by foes I come;
A sinner, save me, or I die;
  An outcast, take me home.

Once safe in thine Almighty arms,
  Let storms come on amain;
There danger never, never harms,—
  There death itself is gain.

And when I stand before thy throne,
  And all thy glory see;
Still be my righteousness alone
  To hide myself in thee.

V.

On the Death of R. B.,

A Village-school Girl, who fell sweetly asleep in Jesus, May, 1851.

My eyes are very dim mother,
I cannot see you right;
Sit near and read my favorite hymn,
For I shall die to-night.

"Jesus who lived,"—yes, that mother,
I learned it on your knee;
Well I remember where you sat,
When first you taught it me.

Oh yes, read on and on, mother,
The words that Jesus said;
And think, long after I am gone,
He bore our sins instead.

Is the rush candle out, mother?
For all is midnight dark;

Oh, take my hand—I will not doubt:
  See, mother—mother, hark!

Oh, bright and blessed things, mother,
  My soul it is that sees;
Yet feel you not the rush of wings
  Makes musical the breeze?

Kind faces throng the room, mother,
  And gentle loving eyes:
Dost thou not hear, "Come, sister, come,"
  My welcome to the skies?

Is this the happy land, mother?
  My heart is almost still.—
The childless mother felt her hand
  All in a moment chill.

VI.

"Abide in Me, and I in You."

JOHN, xv. 4.

"ABIDE in me, and I in you:"
  Ah, blessed, sweet commands;

Soft as the fall of early dew
  On parched, thirsty lands.

Abide in thee, my Lord, my God,
  Omnipotent to save
From all the dangers of my road,
  From Satan and the grave.

In thee whose wisdom none can tell,
  Whose grace no limit knows;
Whose love Divine, unsearchable,
  A boundless ocean flows.

Then welcome joy, and farewell fear,
  And calm, ye wild waves, be;
If only, Lord, thy voice I hear,
  "My child, abide in me."

VII.

The Transfiguration.

MARK, ix. 2–8.

How blessed on this holy hill
  It were our tents to rear;

To see thy glory, and be still:
"'Tis good, Lord, to be here."

Why should we seek the world again,
Its scenes of toil and fear;
The rough and rugged throngs of men?—
"'Tis good, Lord, to be here."

The sights and sounds of sin below
Move many a sigh and tear;
Why from this tranquil mountain go?—
"'Tis good, Lord, to be here."

Thus often, in some favored hour,
We shun the conflict drear,
And say, while storms beneath us lower,
"'Tis good, Lord, to be here."

Wait, O my soul, a little while;
Soon, in a happier sphere,
Thou shalt confess beneath his smile,
"'Tis good, Lord, to be here."

VIII.

The Fear of Death Removed.

PSALMS, xxiii. 4.

THOU speakest of the fear of death, its ghastliness and gloom,
And dreary shadows flung across the portals of the tomb;
Thou sayest that the best of men must tremble like the grass,
When from the loved and lovely earth to unknown worlds they pass:
Thou picturest the love of home, the light of childhood's sky,
And askest, who could leave such things with no heart-breaking sigh?

My heart was pained; and oft I thought, Can this be true of those,
Who have on Jesus cast the guilt and burden of their woes?—

'Till, as I mused, the truths of God, like beacon-fires at night,
Gleamed forth from Scripture's vivid page upon my aching sight:—
"I know that my Redeemer lives; and, though my flesh must die,
By dying, he shall swallow up the grave in victory.
Ay, in the shadowy vale of death no evil will I fear,
For thou art with me, thou, my God, to animate and cheer."

So sang the patriarchs of old, before the veil was riven,
Which from the pilgrim fathers hid the open gate of heaven;
But hark, what clearer tidings now our songs of triumph swell!
"Christ Jesus hath abolished death, and holds the keys of hell;
He lives, and whoso trusts in him shall never, never die;

He lives,—this mortal shall be clothed with immortality.
The portals of the tomb are burst; ye ransomed captives, sing,
Where's thy victory, O Grave? where, darksome Death, thy sting?"

No wild dreams these,—I speak of things that oftentimes have been;
Of parting words that I have heard, and death-beds I have seen;
Of a long-loved father, circled by his children and his wife,
With every joy to gladden earth, and bind him unto life,
Who calmly said, "My children must not stay me from my rest;
My work is finished, and I long to sleep on Jesus' breast;
Death cannot part me from his love—Lord Jesus, it is thou—
I have no fear, my children; for my Lord is with me now."

And gentle girls, too, have I seen, who seemed
for earth too frail,
Tread with a firm, confiding step, adown that
lonesome vale;
Ay, and on childhood's pallid lip have words
of triumph played,
And tiny fingers, clasped in death, told, "I am
not afraid."
But why speak on of scenes like these, when
every heart must know
Some parent, partner, brother, child, who
trembled not to go
Where Jesus' steps had gone before, and he
himself is nigh,
Whispering above those boisterous waves,
"Fear nothing, it is I!"

Ours is the grief, who still are left in this far
wilderness,
Which will at times, now they are gone, seem
blank and comfortless,
For moments spent with loving hearts are
breezes from the hills,

And the balm of Christian brotherhood like
Eden's dew distils;
And we whose footsteps and whose hearts so
often fail and faint,
Seem ill to spare the cheering voice of one de-
parted saint.
But oh, we sorrow not like those whom no
bright hopes sustain,
For them who sleep in Jesus, God will with
him bring again.
Love craves the presence and the sight of all
its well-beloved,
And therefore weep we in the homes whence
they are far removed;
Love craves the presence and the sight of
each beloved one,
And therefore Jesus spake the word which
caught them to his throne:—
"Father, I will that all my own, which thou
hast granted me,
Be with me where I am to share my glory's
bliss with thee."

Thus heaven is gathering, one by one, in its capacious breast,
All that is pure and permanent, and beautiful and blest;
The family is scatter'd yet, though of one home and heart,
Part militant in earthly gloom, in heavenly glory part.
But who can speak the rapture, when the circle is complete,
And all the children sundered now before their Father meet?
One fold, one Shepherd, one employ, one everlasting home:
"Lo! I come quickly." "Even so, Amen! Lord Jesus, come!"

THE END.

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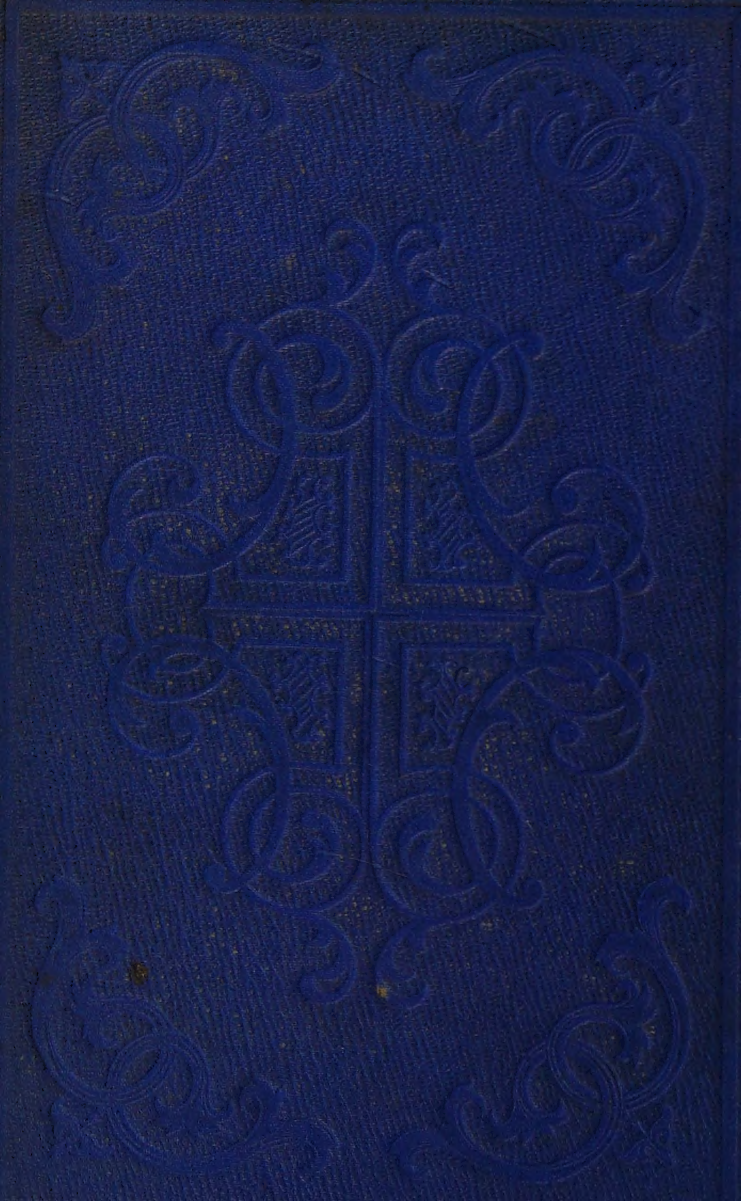
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